

THE PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN YOUTH:
THE DESTRUCTIVE CAPITALISTIC PERSONALITY COMPLEX AND
A MODEL OF MINISTRY FOR A MOVEMENT

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David D. Mitchell

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DAVID D. MITCHELL

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Faculty Committee

Cornish R. Rogers, Chairperson
Garth Baker-Fletcher

Dean of the Faculty

Marjorie H. Suchocki

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Abstract

The Public Enemy Number One of African-American Youth:

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a Model of Ministry for a Movement

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David D. Mitchell

A mean-spirited, angry, violent, and materialistic African-American youth has emerged from communities overrun by crime, violence, gang activity, drugs, and family brokenness. Because of frustrated aspirations resulting from poverty, substandard education, and discrimination, these youth acquire the Destructive Capitalistic Personality Complex, or the DCPC, and enter the drug business because it appears to them the only feasible means to self-esteem and material gain. The DCPC is the public enemy number one of the African-American community in its struggle for liberation.

A critical evaluation of Black theology in the United States is the method utilized to define Black theology's lack of vision, focus, and function and to identify the spiritual, social, political, and economic implications of these shortcomings in order to propose a strategic plan of action for the struggle against the DCPC.

Black theology emerged in the late 1960s in response to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s and the Black Power Movement of the 1960s. It has promoted self-love and the political consciousness of African-Americans. However, it failed to inspire a movement at the grassroots level because it lacked a clearly defined vision, focus, and function. By contrast, South African Black

theology was successful in inspiring a movement because it had a well defined vision, focus, and function and concentrated on apartheid as public enemy number one. In the United States, Black theology's target has been racism at large, which is too big, vague, and unrealistic a target. This spread Black theology too thin and the vagueness of the target failed to energize people to create a movement.

A strategic plan of action grounded in the Black theology tradition will take two models, the Million Man March and the ministry of Canaan Baptist Church of Harlem, New York, to teach the spiritual value of self-love and to empower churches and individuals across the nation to participate in a movement against the DCPC.

*Copies of final draft pages
returned for*

Table of Contents

Corrections

	Page
Bibliographic Essay	1
Chapter	
1. Black Theology: The Message Without a Movement	14
Introduction	14
The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa	18
The Youth Crisis: A New Challenge for Black Theology in the U.S.	31
The Different Socio-Political Backgrounds of South African and African-American Theologies	46
2. The Threat to African-American Youth: The Destructive Capitalistic Personality Complex	51
Introduction	51
Nihilism and the DCPC: A National Epidemic	55
The Drug Business and the DCPC in Action	59
The Crack Cocaine-CIA-Los Angeles Gangs Connection	61
3. U. S. Black Theology: A Historical Perspective	68
Influences on the Black Theology of the 1960s	68
Historical Roots of U. S. Black Theology	68
Black Theology in Action: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement	72
Malcolm X and Radical Black Power Theology	79
Types of Black Theology <i>see p. 83</i>	83

	Black Womanist Theology	83
	The Black Church and Black Theology	89
4.	The DCPC and The African-American Community: A Model of Ministry for Healing	94
	The Million Man March and the Spiritual Value of Self-Love	95
	The Canaan Baptist Church Model	101
	The Tithing Model: A Black Theology Perspective	104
	The Political Model	106
	The Pastoral Care Model	106
	The Youth Ministry Model	107
	Cultural Enrichment	107
	Educational Enrichment	108
	Canaan's Intern Program	108
	The Canaan Resource Center	108
	Substance Abuse	109
	Prison Ministry	109
5.	The Destructive Capitalistic Personality and the Solution	111
	Step 1: Black Theology	113
	Step 2: Black Theology Model: A Church and Community Perspective	116
	Step 3: The Drug Problem	120
	Step 4: Community Policing	124

Step 5: The Political Strategy	125
Conclusion	127
Bibliography	130

Bibliographic Essay

Some of the sources used in this project are described below.

This project has been most influenced by the work of numerous authors in the area of Black theology in the U.S. and in South Africa. The 1992 Los Angeles Uprising gave birth to a course at the Claremont School of Theology entitled "Race, Rage, and Reconciliation," which was taught by Cornish Rogers. In this class serious questions concerning black rage were raised, and I obtained some helpful insights for the work in this project. The problem of widespread nihilism in the African-American community was discussed and I concluded that this reality was a serious factor in the rage of the youth in Los Angeles and across urban America.

The book Working with Black Youth: Opportunities for Christian Ministry contains numerous articles written by African-American Black theologians who took a critical look at U.S. Black theology from the perspective of youth ministry, and this was helpful in establishing substance for my thesis. Romney Mosley's article was most helpful in this area. Mosley argued that "the Black theology that galvanized the black churches of the sixties and early seventies has exhausted its momentum." Additionally, Moseley asserts that Black theology has failed to have any significant impact as a practical guide to social

transformation.¹ It was this perspective of Moseley's that provided insight to this project's main argument that Black theology is merely rhetoric if it does not provide the church a plan of action for social transformation, particularly with regard to the youth crisis across the U.S.

In numerous consultations with my mentor and friend, Noel Erskine, the ideas of this project were discussed. He urged me to reread Cone's early work and gave me a bibliography of other books to read in the area of Black theology. Further, he thought that the early work of the South African Black theology movement might give substance to and be helpful in the development of one of the key arguments of this project. Therefore, he advised me to read the book, The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa, edited by Basil Moore. This book is a compilation of articles written by South African scholars on Black theology, which were all quite helpful to this project's assertion that South African Black theology blossomed into a successful movement. This book was quite helpful in several areas. First, this project established from Moore's article on Black theology that even though the title Black theology had been imported from the United States of America, the content of South African Black theology was different.

¹Romney M. Moseley, "Retrieving Intergenerational and Intercultural Faith," in Working with Black Youth: Opportunities for Christian Ministry, eds. Charles R. Foster and Grant S. Shockley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 84.

Moore's insights on South African Black theology aided the development of this project's argument that a movement emerged in South Africa, but not in the U.S., because of particular conditions. There were particular differences in the majority and minority status of the Black populations, the constitutions of the two nations, and the political muscle and machine of the African National Congress that was behind the South African Black theology movement. In the United States there was no comparable organization that adopted the vision of U.S. Black theology for the stimulation of a movement. Second, the book made me ask why a focused and sustained movement emerged in South Africa, but not in the U.S. The answer to this question is the theme of Chapter 1 of this project, which asserts that there were several important differences between South African Black theology and U.S. Black theology. Moore's point that South African Black theology focused on the situation and suffering of the people gave substance to this project's argument that South African Black theology emerged at the grass roots level for the people and by the people to liberate the people. He asserts:

It begins with people--specific people, in a specific situation and with specific problems to face. Thus it starts with black people in the South African situation facing the strangling problems of oppression, fear, hunger, insult and dehumanisation. It tries to understand as clearly as possible who these people are, what their life experiences are, and the nature and cause of their suffering. This is an indispensable datum of

Black Theology.²

Third, from Moore's above assertion, this project established that Black theology in South Africa started at the grass roots level with a people fed up specifically with the system of apartheid, and this was one of the reasons it emerged into a successful movement.

Fourth, Adam Small's article, "Blackness versus Nihilism," and Steve Biko's article, "Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity," in The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa helped this project to find support and to develop its arguments in several important areas. First, that South African Black theology's affirmation of their blackness ignited a Black theology movement at the grass roots level, and the people formed themselves into a united force against what they identified as their number one enemy, apartheid. Subsequently, this created an impassioned momentum at the grass roots level, establishing the South African Black theology movement. By contrast, U.S. Black theology did not at its emergence in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and has not yet, generated similar support at the grass roots level in the U.S. This reality is one of the significant differences between South African Black theology and U.S. Black theology. Second, South African Black theology had a more practical function

²Basil Moore, comp., The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973), 6.

than its U.S. counterpart. Third, South African Black theology focused on a sole enemy, apartheid, that gave the movement a clearly defined vision, focus, practical function, and realistic goal.

Noel Erskine's book, King Among the Theologians,³ provided insight to the arguments that Cone's vision for a movement of liberation was grounded in the notion of Black power, and that Cone believed that Black theology is accountable to the African-American Church, and must serve the needs of the church. From Erskine's position on Cone's understanding of the responsibility of theology to the church, this project established that the role of Black theology in the African-American community is to interpret to the church the meaning and implications of suffering, and to give the church practical guidance in developing a plan of action for liberation. Furthermore, this book was supportive to this project's argument that King's Black theology was one of action, and also called for the profound involvement of the church.

James Cone's books, A Black Theology of Liberation, God of the Oppressed, and Martin and Malcolm and America: A Dream or a Nightmare, were helpful to the construction of the Black theology in this project.⁴ The Black theology of

³Noel Leo Erskine, King among the Theologians (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1994).

⁴James Cone, A Black Theology of Liberation, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1986); God of the Oppressed

this project is a theology of liberation for the spiritual, social, political, and economic liberation of the African-American community, and African-American youth in particular. For Cone, the task of theology is to inform the community of the truth of its historical existence and what the implications of these spiritual, social, political, and economic realities mean in each generation in order to keep the struggle for liberation alive. Cone's notion of the task of theology informed this project's critical assessment of U.S. Black theology of the past 25 plus years, and supported this project's argument that it has endeavored to battle racism at large rather than focusing on feasible goals, spreading itself too thin. Consequently, an impassioned liberation movement at the grass roots level has not emerged.

This project was inspired by Cone's notions in God of the Oppressed to develop the argument and support its central theme that Black theology is the message of liberation to the oppressed, and to put that message in the midst of the African-American community to speak to the sufferings of the African-American youth across the U.S.

This project used Cornel West's notion of nihilism as

(New York: Seabury Press, 1975); Martin and Malcolm and America: A Dream or a Nightmare (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991).

described in his book, Race Matters,⁵ to give substance to the argument that African-American youths emerging from socio-spiritual despair acquire a Destructive Capitalistic Personality Complex (DCPC), lacking a sense of meaning and hope. Many of these youths enter the drug business and a life of crime and gang violence.

Deborah Prothrow-Stith and Michaela Weissman's book, Deadly Consequences,⁶ gave substance to this project's argument that the status of African-American youth is a national crisis. This crisis is the product of an environment of socio-spiritual despair in which the drug business attracts thousands of African-American youths into a life of crime and violence. For many, the consequences of such a life are prison or death. These authors' work gave substance to this project's creation of the coinage, "Destructive Capitalistic Personality Complex" (DCPC).

Gary Webb's article, "'Crack' Plague's Roots are in Nicaraguan War," published in the San Jose Mercury News,⁷ aided in this project's development of the argument that the crack cocaine business is widespread in the U.S., and has helped gangs finance and organize their organizations into

⁵Cornel West, Race Matters (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993).

⁶Deborah Prothrow-Stith and Michaela Weissman, Deadly Consequences (New York: HarperPerennial, 1991).

⁷Gary Webb, "'Crack' Plague's Roots are in Nicaraguan War," San Jose Mercury News, 18-20 Aug. 1996.

sophisticated operations. Furthermore, the individualism and violence of the crack business are key factors in the widespread epidemic of nihilism.

Garth Baker-Fletcher's book, Xodus: An African American Male Journey,⁸ gave substance and support in several areas of this project. First, it gave substance to the argument that the historical roots of Black theology are grounded in the radical faith tradition that evolved from slavery. Second, For Baker-Fletcher, Malcolm's notion of self-love is a part of the African-American male's Xodus journey in a nihilistic society to find an emancipated identity. His notion of self-love in the Xodus journey gave substance and support to this project's argument that cultivating the spiritual value of self-love in communities is the first necessary step to liberation and is significant to the destruction of the DCPC and nihilism. Additionally, self-love is essential to the plan of action of self-help for socio-spiritual liberation that this project advocates. Third, his insight that the oppression of African-American women must be taken seriously by African-American men and the church gave substance to this project's argument that womanist theology is essential to Black theology and the liberation of the African-American community.

Peter J. Paris' book, The Social Teaching of the Black

⁸Garth Baker-Fletcher, Xodus: An African American Male Journey (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

Churches,⁹ helped this project support the historical argument that slaves reformed Christian theology into an informal Black theology to empower them in their search for hope and meaning and to embrace a religious faith that addressed their oppression. Additionally, Paris' book supported the argument that historically the African-American church has been the institution that has advocated spiritual, social, political, and economic justice for the African-American community.

J. Deotis Roberts' book, The Prophethood of Black Believers: An African American Political Theology for Ministry,¹⁰ helped this project support the historical argument that an informal Black theology was initiated during slavery by the slaves. Additionally, Roberts' book gave support to this project's argument that Black Womanist theology must be accepted by the African-American church in order to bring total healing and liberation to the African-American community. Roberts' work gave support to the argument that one key problem is that African-American churches use the bible to distort the Christian doctrine of humanity in order to oppress African-American women.

Jacquelyn Grant's article, "A Theological Framework" in

⁹Peter Paris, The Social Teaching of the Black Churches (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

¹⁰J. Deotis Roberts, The Prophethood of Black Believers: An African American Political Theology for Ministry (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994).

the book Working with Black Youth: Opportunities for Christian Ministry,¹¹ helped this project establish that African-American churches' traditional understanding of the Christian doctrine of humanity has been self-destructive in the sense that it perpetuates the gender oppression of African-American women.

George Cummings book, A Common Journey: Black Theology (USA) and Latin American Liberation Theology,¹² informed this entire project, but gave specific support to the argument that the U.S Black theology that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s was a product of African-American faith in response to a history of struggle and oppression; it merely built upon the faith tradition of slave ancestors which viewed God as liberator.

Luther Ivory's dissertation, "Martin Luther King, Jr. as a Theologian of Radical Involvement,"¹³ gave substance to this project's view that King's Black theology was one of radical involvement. Additionally, it helped in the construction of the plan of action this project proposes as

¹¹Jacquelyn Grant, "A Theological Framework," in Working with Black Youth: Opportunities for Christian Ministry, eds. Charles R. Foster and Grant S. Schockley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989).

¹²George Cummings, A Common Journey: Black Theology (USA) and Latin American Liberation Theology (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993).

¹³Luther Ivory, "Martin Luther King, Jr. as a Theologian of Radical Involvement" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1996).

a method and model to be used to bring liberation to the African-American community.

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s book, Why We Can't Wait,¹⁴ helped to develop the argument that King's Black theology was one of action and radical involvement, and this notion is one that this project uses to give shape to its plan of action for liberation in the African-American community.

Malcolm X's notions of self-love and self-pride as described in The Autobiography of Malcolm X¹⁵ supported the construction of a plan of action to bring liberation in the African-American community.

Wyatt Tee Walker's books, The African-American Church and Economic Development and Afrocentrism and Christian Faith, gave support to the development of a model of ministry for the African-American church.¹⁶

C. Eric Lincoln's book, The Black Church in the African American Experience,¹⁷ gave specific contributions to the development of the argument that the African-American church has historically advocated the spiritual, social, political,

¹⁴Martin Luther King, Jr., Why We Can't Wait (New York: New American Library, 1964).

¹⁵Malcolm X, The Autobiography of Malcolm X (New York: Ballantine Books, 1964).

¹⁶Wyatt Tee Walker, The African-American Church and Economic Development (New York: Martin Luther King Fellows Press, 1994); Afrocentrism and Christian Faith (New York: Martin Luther King Fellows Press, 1993).

¹⁷C. Eric Lincoln, The Black Church in the African American Experience (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990).

and Lawrence H. Mamiya, ← adding this author will change pages 12 & 13.

and economic liberation of the African-American community.

Tony Brown's book, Black Lies, Whites Lies: The Truth According to Tony Brown,¹⁸ was used to help develop this project's argument that self-love must be achieved before a plan of action of self-help will be successful in the African-American community.

Delores Williams book, Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk,¹⁹ helped this project to develop its argument that Black Womanist theology is essential to U.S. Black theology.

Michael Dyson's book, Reflecting Black: African-American Cultural Criticism,²⁰ was helpful in exploring solutions to the drug problem in the African-American community.

The book, Black Americans: A Statistical Sourcebook,²¹ edited by Louise L. Hornor, provided important statistical data on African-American youths.

Many other sources were used in this project that were

¹⁸Tony Brown, Black Lies, White Lies: The Truth According to Tony Brown (New York: William Morrow and Co, 1995).

¹⁹Delores Williams, Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993).

²⁰Michael Eric Dyson, Reflecting Black: African-American Cultural Criticism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

²¹Louise L. Hornor, ed., Black Americans: A Statistical Sourcebook (Palo Alto, Calif.: Information Publications, 1994).

not mentioned above.

CHAPTER 1

Black Theology: The Message Without A Movement

Introduction

Black theology is the message of Christ to the poor and the oppressed. It is a message of hope and liberation for every aspect of human existence. The message of Christ as revealed in the historic Jesus is a message of hope and a revolutionary movement for liberation. It is the position of this project that if the message of Black theology does not bring life to a liberation movement, it is just rhetoric; it is meaningless in the lives of those to whom it speaks. A message that does not form a plan of action to alleviate the daily struggles of human existence in a meaningful way amounts to only words with no substance for enabling the oppressed.

The historic Jesus was not merely a prophet proclaiming liberation, but his divine purpose was to come into the midst of an oppressive world to demonstrate Holy example and to teach humanity through his redemptive love, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection the meaning of struggle to obtain ultimate hope. That is to say, Christ was the substance and the plan of action to give liberation to the oppressed. According to chapter 1 of the Gospel of John, the historic Jesus was the Word made flesh or the message that initiated the ultimate movement for liberation. That is, he was the divine power responsible for creation that became a

part of creation to change the spiritual, social, political, and human condition. To put it simply, the God who creates is the God who also saves. Black theologians embrace the aforementioned chapter in the Gospel of John and Luke 4:18 to just name a few passages which give credibility to the development of a meaningful theology that puts Christ in the center of the African-American experience in the U.S. in a struggle to change their spiritual, social, economic, and political condition. Therefore, this means that Black theology is the message of Christ and the Black church is the means for Christ to liberate African-Americans. However, the message (Black theology) must develop a strategic plan in order to empower the means (the Black church) to rise to the challenges of the twenty-first century. Although some Black churches have a strategic plan of ministry in place with regard to the youth, there is still a need for a focused national movement of Christ to eliminate oppression and usher in spiritual liberation in the African-American community, and in particular in the youth. This project will argue that the challenge for U.S. Black theology is to reveal the message of hope and initiate a movement for liberation at the grass roots level focused on the empowerment of the youth. Additionally, this argument will maintain that by centering a movement on the youth real change will occur for the entire African-American community. The problem with U.S. Black theology is that it

provides the message to attack racism, but it has not provided a plan of action focused on the liberation of the African-American community. However, this project contends that to focus on the crucial issues of the African-American community the point of departure is to start with the Black youth. The despair that the African-American family faces today must be alleviated, and the way to bring spiritual healing to the family is to focus on the struggles of the African-American youth.

This chapter will provide a critique of U.S. Black theology by examining the following things.

1. The vision, passion, and function of Black theology in South Africa is examined as the message of liberation and the movement that eliminated apartheid.

2. The substance of U.S. Black theology is explored by looking critically at certain key ideas in the theology of James Cone, to support my thesis that Cone's theology fails to provide the community with a clearly defined plan of action to initiate a liberation movement at the grass roots level. This theological examination will include pointing out that U.S. Black theology has been unable to start a movement at the grass roots level as South African Black theology did in South Africa. However, Cone is a superb scholar whose work continues to help the African-American community understand the source of its oppression. Additionally, the African-American church rejected some of

Cone's ideas and this was a factor in U.S. Black theology's subsequent failure.

3. The complexity of the key problems that perpetuate the vicious cycle of oppression in the African-American community is outlined to support my thesis that these problems are all related to the national crisis of spiritual, social, and economic oppression that African-American youth find themselves trapped in across the U.S. in an ongoing struggle to carve out a niche for themselves.

4. South African Black theology identified apartheid as its public enemy number one. By contrast, in the U.S. a public enemy number one has yet to be identified by Black theology. This project will identify a clearly defined public enemy number one. However, the spiritual, moral, and social crises of African-American youth are similar to those Black South Africans had in the sense that they both posed the same threat of hopelessness.

This project will determine what the public enemy number one of U.S. society is in relation to the oppression and crisis of African-American youth and the African-American community in order to provide focus to Black theology. A single identified enemy will make Black theology more relevant at the grass roots level. Cone, on the other hand, has simply named racism as a whole the enemy. Racism is too broad and complex to serve as the rallying point for a feasible and attainable movement with

realistic and well defined goals.

5. This chapter will summarize its argument and make several important recommendations that are necessary for U.S. Black theology to reestablish its vision, focus, function, and objectives. In other words, Black theology by way of the church alone will never get rid of racism in U.S. society, but it can empower the people so that they can gain the unity and passion to initiate a movement to rebuild the African-American community.

6. Finally, the socio-political historical backgrounds of South African and U.S. Black theologies will be compared.

This chapter is the present problem of racism in the United States at the expense of African-Americans. The evils of racism focus is a new Black church community.

This heading is the same as the book you use. Do you want to change the heading in this heading? If so, also change the contents.

historic and of the evils of of the United States African-ject is not the it rather the eology through the American

The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa

The freedom movement in South Africa succeeded in eliminating the system of apartheid and electing a Black President, Nelson Mandela, and the system of apartheid no longer exists. It is the position of this project that Black theology in South Africa initiated a movement at the

grass roots level that intensified on a national level and finally led to the elimination of apartheid and the election victory of President Nelson Mandela.

In order to argue the aforementioned point, it will be necessary to make a close examination of the early development of Black theology in South Africa to point out how it emerged with a clearly defined objective. To put it simply, its sole purpose was to end apartheid and address the crucial issues of spiritual consciousness to build a new South Africa.

Additionally, U.S. Black theology emerged in the 1970s as a response to the Black power movement, a challenge to Western theology, and an interpretation of the message of Christ to African-Americans from the Black experience of oppression in the U.S., rather than emerging as an activist movement around a single crucial issue that addressed Black oppression in a nationalistic manner, as did South African Black theology when it emerged to eliminate apartheid. Instead, U.S. Black theology spread itself thin by addressing a plethora of issues, thus making it less effective. I will say more about this in this chapter and the succeeding ones as well.

To examine the early development of Black theology in South Africa, I will rely on the apartheid era writings of several insightful scholars who wrote essays in the book, The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa. These

essays clearly talk about the spiritual, social, and political situation of Black South Africans living in the system of apartheid. The oppression of Black South Africans has been as complex as oppression in any culture, with the issues of the lack of jobs and economic opportunity, the lack of adequate housing, inadequate public education, institutional and social racism, substance abuse, crime, teenage pregnancy, the lack of spiritual and social self-awareness, and many others related to family security and stability. However, these essays consistently addressed apartheid as a point of departure for confronting all the components that perpetuate oppression in South Africa. Therefore, this project asserts that each of these essays understood South African Black theology as a movement as well as a message of hope. In other words, these writers at the outset of the formation of South African Black theology perceived it to become an active practical movement. There was a high expectation for South African Black theology to do something concrete about the situation in which Black South Africans lived. In the essay, "What is Black Theology?" Basil Moore asserts that Black theologians in the United States constructed a Black theology in response to the Black power movement which later became an important aspect of the emergence of a theology of liberation. Additionally, he makes the claim that the title Black theology is an African-America phrase that is borrowed by

South African scholars, but the substance of South African Black theology is vastly different than that of the United States.¹

This project concurs with Moore that there are distinct differences in the Black theology of South Africa than that of the United States. It will be necessary to limit those differences to four in order to focus on the most important aspect of my argument that South African Black theology emerged as a movement to eliminate apartheid, but in the United States Black theology did not emerge with one unifying objective. It emerged to challenge Eurocentric theology and to respond to the Black power movement of the 1970s. The following four areas will be the focus of discussion to support this assertion:

1. Black theology in South Africa was well-defined and focused; it identified public enemy number one (apartheid) that addressed the totality of oppression.

2. Black theology in South Africa created Black unity at the grass roots level and formed itself into a nationalistic expression for liberation.

3. Black theology emerged to change cultural and theological symbols to create a new sense of spiritual consciousness and to build a new South Africa.

These essays were chosen as resources for the argument

¹Basil Moore, "What is Black Theology?" in The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973), 1.

of this chapter because they capture the spirit of Black South Africans struggling for liberation; they also manifest the tension that existed in apartheid South Africa at the earliest emergence and development of a Black theology. According to the compiler, Basil Moore, after these essays' initial publication by the University Christian Movement in 1972, they were quickly banned by the South African government. The political authorities viewed these essays as a national security threat. One essayist, Sabelo Ntwasa, was held under house arrest and proclaimed a serious threat to national security and good order and discipline. Sabelo Ntwasa had to withdraw as the editor and his writings were banned from publication.²

The South African government's response to these essays' publication gives us some insight into the power rooted in the substance of South African Black theology and into the fear of the government that a movement for liberation was imminent. The government wanted to ensure that a movement supported by the country's majority, more than 20 million Black South Africans, did not emerge. The South African government was prepared to embrace repressive courses of action to protect its system of apartheid. Additionally, this is an excellent example of how the repressive reaction of the government would ultimately help the momentum of the South African Black theology movement.

²Moore, "What is Black Theology?" 1.

When Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama bus, the local government reacted by arresting a woman with an impeccable reputation in her church and community. The local civil rights leaders and the African-American community responded with an organized, focused, united, and impassioned protest that gained national prominence, with Martin Luther King, Jr. emerging as the spokesman of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

Most sociologists would concur that the reaction dynamics between the oppressor and the oppressed in cases such as the aforementioned ones actually help to intensify protest movements and to unite the oppressed. This chapter contends that the aggressive reaction of the South African government in this situation and numerous other situations of this sort contributed to the South African Black theology movement's subsequent gain of popularity and power, the emergence with a national agenda, success in educating the masses and generating unity and impassioned hope, and its ability to obtain a focused vision and formulating it as a methodology to function with determination. The war between South African Black theology and apartheid ignited at the earliest stages of South African Black theology's development, and the movement emerged. For several decades the African National Congress (ANC) had become a political force which aided the success of the Black theology movement at the grass roots. Therefore, as South African Black

theology matured in substance it became the hope and apartheid was identified by the oppressed as public enemy number one.

Furthermore, the South African Black theology in these essays gave direction to Black South Africans in a desperate situation and the government's strong reaction to them validates the assertion that Black theology was a serious challenge to apartheid. Basil Moore argues that these essays were written to initiate a liberation movement. He writes:

They were not written as comfortable academic exercises, nor were they written to tickle the fancy of those uninvolved in the conflict in South Africa. They were written by Black South Africans living in a situation of frightening oppression. And they were written for Black South Africans exhorting them to participate in the struggle to throw off their chains.³

This chapter concurs with Moore that South African Black theology's sole reason for emerging was to create a movement for liberation. Therefore, in this chapter's examination of Moore's above contention it finds the support to the position that this collective force was inspired to destroy apartheid. Apartheid symbolized a whole system and in the minds and souls of Black South Africans it was identified as the one enemy that perpetuated many evils to oppress them.

³Basil Moore, introduction to Challenge of Black Theology, by Basil Moore, comp. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973), viii.

The vision and clearly defined focus of Black theology also emerged at its earliest developmental stages because apartheid encompassed many evils interwoven in one whole system of oppression. This fact made a system of oppression less complex to oppose with a definite vision because of the label given this system, apartheid. The vision was established on the premise that there was no liberation as long as apartheid existed in South Africa. Therefore, the South African Black theology movement obtained a vision that aided the development of the protest means, the church and political institutions.

The substance of South African Black theology had a well-defined endeavor, proclaiming to the oppressed in South Africa and in other nations around the world that apartheid was enslaving human beings spiritually, socially, politically, and economically. This task was easy because apartheid was the most oppressive system in a sophisticated world. The vision of South African Black theology to develop the protest means to dismantle apartheid was a vision that the whole civilized world could embrace.

If the South African government had only perpetuated racism by red lining the Black community from economic resources, promoting job discrimination through unfair hiring practices, or by failing to adequately educate its poor citizens it would have been no different from many powerful nations, such as the United States, Germany, Great

Britain, France, and Nigeria. But because these racist practices along with many others were structurally formulated in the system called apartheid, it generated much more attention and outrage throughout the world. South African Black theology and many in the world community soon embraced the same vision, to get rid of apartheid once and for all.

In the essays in The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa, the function of South African Black theology is referred to as a movement to change social, political, and economic conditions by establishing a new constitution with which this country would be governed, and to uplift the oppressed from spiritual alienation. Moore defines the function of South African Black theology in South Africa as a movement against a system and for a people struggling for human dignity and a deeper sense of worth. For Moore it is an aggressive search to find meaning through the creation of new symbols to affirm Black humanity. South African Black theology is a theology that speaks for the oppressed, that emerged out of a particular experience of the oppressed, for the liberation of the oppressed.⁴

It is significant in understanding the function of Black theology in South Africa to first have a sense of the violent political climate in which other Black political

⁴Moore, introduction to Challenge of Black Theology, ix.

institutions faced on a daily basis. These institutions were closely monitored by the South African government. Therefore, it was extremely difficult for them to effectively function as the voice for the proclamation of the word of hope, to organize strategy planning meetings for protest events, and to finance the movement. They spent much time reacting to an aggressive government that was consistently trying to do away with their right to even exist. The church is the institution where the South African Black theology movement had to originate because in political institutions all forms of expression advocating liberation were against the law. If one articulated the message of liberation in any political institution that person risked suffering a long prison sentence. Nelson Mandela spent 27 years in prison for opposing apartheid. The church became the one forum where the message of liberation could be proclaimed. The church was the place where South African Black theology took root and spread its message of liberation.

The function of South African Black theology in the church was crucial for another key reason: the spiritual enslavement of the oppressed could be challenged in a more meaningful way in the church. One aspect of the strategy of the South African Black theology movement was to concentrate on changing the perspective of some Black ministers who were trained by white theologians. These ministers were an

important element to the overall spiritual transformation of the spiritually enslaved. According to Moore, the movement had to address this problem aggressively and swiftly to overturn a long tradition of the spiritual enslavement of Black South Africans. Therefore, a plan to influence the education of these ministers was a major function and strategy of the South African Black theology movement.⁵ The preaching of a pie in the sky doctrine had to be transcended by a Gospel that proclaimed Jesus the savior of the oppressed because he was himself one of the poor and the oppressed, and his message was one of liberation and hope for those who struggle for human dignity in a dehumanizing system such as apartheid. Unfortunately, these ministers were trained and influenced by white South African scholars who did not advocate Black liberation theology. Therefore, these ministers did not have the opportunity to be taught and to grasp the Gospel of Jesus from a Black liberation perspective. But this was the only perspective that could break the chains of spiritual bondage, and the intellect had to be freed from the chains first to promote awareness to followers. The function of the South African Black theology movement had on its side a momentum, vision, and impassioned spirit that ignited the souls of its hearers, and these ministers were no exception.

⁵Moore, introduction to Challenge of Black Theology, ix.

The notion of liberation was etched in the souls of Black South Africans. That is, there was a strong inspiration and an urgent desire to become free. The educated, the uneducated, the poor, the middle class, and political and religious leaders all embraced the idea that liberation was urgent and that they would have to fight with their minds, strength, souls, and intelligence to bring liberation to their lives. The South African Black theology movement emerging in what one might describe as a desperate but promising climate, made all the difference in fostering unity. South African Black theology spoke to an oppressed people who were ready to hear its message. The masses were spiritually open, and tired from an era of systemic racism and totalitarianism. A new message with a new vision focusing only on the dismantling of apartheid was good news. The South African Black theology movement was cultivated on this fertile ground; from the seeds of liberation the harvest of Black unity was imminent.

Steve Biko, in his essay, "Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity," argues against the notion that Black South Africans should rely on white liberals to find a solution to the social, political, economic, and spiritual oppression of apartheid.⁶ White liberals proposed a totally

⁶Steve Biko, "Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity," in The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa, comp. Basil Moore (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973), 39.

integrated social revolution as the best means for challenging apartheid. However, Biko argues against the notion that a liberation movement to end apartheid needed to be contingent upon white liberals' involvement. He embraced the social historical assessment of those philosophers who proposed that a social movement is central to the thesis, anti-thesis, and synthesis of the key problem in society. According to Biko, the white liberals understood apartheid to be the thesis, nonracism as the anti-thesis, and they had no clear definition for the synthesis.⁷ Therefore, for white liberals integration was the solution because it would deal with the problem of racism while simultaneously working to destroy the evil system of apartheid. For white liberals, this would be a liberation movement involving all South African citizens against apartheid and racism. The logic behind this theory was that whites would become less racist if they were involved in the struggle for Black liberation. Biko's strategy was radically different. The goal was to obtain a unified Black humanity and a liberated Black consciousness. He understood the thesis as a strong white racism and a strong Black unity as the anti-thesis. For Biko, a movement must revolve around a unified Black front against a white racist front that was responsible for apartheid. According to Biko, there was no other

⁷Biko, 39.

alternative in resolving the oppression of Black Africans.⁸

The South African Black theology movement advocated Black unity as a strategy. Black South Africans were so frustrated with apartheid that Biko's message of unity was easily grasped and aggressively embraced. The South African Black theology movement emerged at a time when apartheid was aggressively fighting to stay in existence which meant increasing repression of Black South Africans. The strength of apartheid made the South African Black theology movement more understandable and credible to the oppressed; ironically its aggression aided Black unity. Biko was among many other leaders who felt that Black unity was essential for liberation; he advocated this unity as an important strategy. Their appeal to the masses urged them to fight as a strong front against apartheid or perish weak and divided. As many embraced this message and united against apartheid, the movement spread and intensified at the grass roots.

The Youth Crisis: A New Challenge for

Black Theology in the U.S.

James Cone has provided the Black church with a theology of liberation rooted in the suffering, death, and love of Christ. He has been a genius at defining the purpose of U.S. Black theology and redefining the Black church and the church as a whole with his theology of liberation. The problem is not so much the substance of

⁸Moore, "What is Black Theology?" 39.

Cone's message, but how to bring alive his message of hope at the grass roots level. This chapter sets forth to struggle with the question: What is it about Cone's Black theology that a movement of liberation failed to emerge? Although James Cone's work on Black theology has been most noted and respected, there are several others who have had much to say on this subject matter, and whose work will be evaluated alongside Cone's in this chapter and throughout this project.

The message of Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan has stirred millions of African-American youths from all religious backgrounds as evidenced at the Million Man March in Washington, D.C. in 1995 and at its anniversary in New York City. Although this powerful reality will be dealt with in the final chapter, it is important to make this distinction early on: these spiritual gatherings across the country have the potential for initiating a long-awaited movement in the African-American community. However, there is another message that this group can embrace: the message of hope from the perspective of Christ, Black theology, which offers a national program or a plan of action to bring liberation. Such a plan has the potential to bring excitement and enthusiasm to a new movement at the grass roots level with this group at the forefront of action.

But Black theology has been unable to generate this kind of national interest over the past twenty plus years.

However, the South African Black theology movement was able to draw enthusiastic support at the grass roots level as pointed out earlier in this chapter. U.S. Black theology has not developed a movement. Therefore, this chapter will examine the following to support this fact as the key reasons for Black theology not developing a movement: first, by examining the social and spiritual climate of the African-American community in which Black theology emerged; second, by examining the vision and function of Black theology and whether it was focused with a clearly defined objective that was able to perpetuate Black unity for action to get rid of a specific public enemy number one.

Black theology emerged as a result of the Black power movement and during a time when African-Americans were enjoying some social and political achievements as a result of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. It was a time of accomplishment, but unfortunately it was also a time of complacency in the African-American community because of the passage of the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, and the integration of public schools, and other public facilities. These radical social and political changes ended the thirst for freedom. They presented the African-American community with a sense of overwhelming success and at the same time a dwindling of the spiritual passion that had ignited the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. In other words, the fire in their bellies was gone, a new

agenda was not established, and the sense of direction was overshadowed by past accomplishments. This led to a national complacency, the weakening of African-American unity due to integration, the rise of the Black middle-class because new legislation offered new opportunities, the development of a new underclass and the rise of new urban ghettos, the demise of the Black power movement, and the division of the civil rights leaders of the 1960s developed too many agendas with little success with any of them, and this dilemma is the climate in which Black theology emerged.

After the untimely death of Martin Luther King, Jr., many of his key followers embraced different social agendas and the Civil Rights Movement ended as it was known in the 1960s. For example, the leadership of King's successor, Ralph Abernathy, as spokesman of the Civil Rights Movement and President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), was short lived because he did not receive the same support as King. Jesse L. Jackson departed from the SCLC to start his own organization, Operation Push. Andrew J. Young won a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, and took a different course. Coretta King established the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent and Social Change. The aforementioned events changed the direction of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. These circumstances contributed to bring the African-American community to its present state of

spiritual, social, economic, and political despair. The youth who grew up during this era have been the most affected and devastated by the events of the past twenty plus years.

The disarray, community transitions, and the redefining of new social, political, and economic goals for the liberation of African-Americans presented the emerging Black theology with a unique challenge to emerge with a vision that all would embrace in order to create a new movement. The Black theology of Cone emerged addressing racism as the cause of the complexity of issues rather than the crucial aforementioned internal issues and external circumstances that challenged the direction and solidarity of the African-American community to continue to strive for liberation.⁹ Additionally, Cone's Black theology did not take into account the political and social dynamics that set in motion the Black flight of the middle-class and the unfortunate development of a new Black underclass. Black theology needed to emerge with a vision that addressed all the above key concerns in order to rally the African-American community together as an effective force for liberation. However, the vision of Black theology was quite effective in putting in clear theological terms the need for a movement and the meaning of such a movement from the perspective of

⁹Cone's theology was initially presented with the publication of Black Theology and Black Power (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1969).

Christ. Noel L. Erskine, in his book, King among the Theologians, points out that Cone's vision for a movement of liberation was one that was rooted in the concept of Black power from a christological perspective. Erskine argues that Cone understood Black power and the power of Jesus Christ as being one and the same for African-American Christians. The traditional Black church has been rooted solely in its belief in a Christ who identifies with Black oppression and is therefore a part of the struggle for liberation. Furthermore, the use of Black power to find liberation means that Black power is Christ for African-Americans.¹⁰ Cone believed that African-Americans became disenchanted with King and began to embrace Black power as a more realistic alternative to the message King articulated urging them to love the enemy.¹¹ According to Cone the enemy is definitely racism, and that Black power is the necessary response to racism. However, the vision that Cone's Black theology embraces is one that perpetuated division rather than unity. As previously mentioned, the African-American community at the emergence of this early writing of Cone was challenged by numerous internal and external crises that initiated a new discourse for the community. Although Cone's message set forth to initiate a

¹⁰Noel Leo Erskine, King among the Theologians (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1994), 85.

¹¹Erskine, 85.

new Black power movement from the perspective of Christ, it instead made a large group of African-American Christians suspicious of a theology rooted in the radical ideas of the Black power movement. In particular, those who were followers of King and had experienced some successes from embracing the love ethic of Christ rejected Cone's position. In his book, And the Walls Came Tumbling Down, Ralph Abernathy affirms his belief in nonviolent direct action as a means for liberation. He writes:

But the advocates of violence, black as well as white, had not correctly read the signs of the times--and they had underestimated the strength of the organization that Martin had left behind. They had also failed to take into account my own firm resolve that what Martin stood for would be carried forward, no matter what. In the early morning hours after Martin had been shot, I called a news conference in Memphis and made our plans for the future quite clear. First, I reaffirmed our continuing commitment to nonviolence and our willingness to risk our lives for that principle.¹²

King's supporters, encouraged by their successes with nonviolent direct action, continued to employ that type of action rather than adopting Black power strategies.¹³ It is

¹²Ralph Abernathy, And the Walls Came Tumbling Down: Ralph David Abernathy -- An Autobiography (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 456.

¹³In Abernathy's autobiography, And the Walls Came Tumbling Down, he asserts that nonviolent direct action was a strategy grounded in the theology of suffering from the Christian perspective (p. 157). This was a belief that he practiced until his death in April, 1990.

As evidenced by their actions, the followers of King continued to believe in nonviolent direct action rather than Cone's thoughts on Black power. Throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s numerous organizations, including Operation People

significant that at the same time that Cone presented his Black theology a new Center for Social Change to teach King's nonviolent direct action was being established. King's nonviolent direct action was being embraced by the African-American community and the European-American community. This made it extremely difficult for Cone's Black theology to gain the support and attention needed to start a movement and to unify the African-American community.

Therefore, the vision of Cone's Black theology had the substance of liberation, but it emerged at a time of tremendous social, political, and institutional changes in the African-American community, and for certain religious groups' perception of its message as too radical made it difficult for it to start a movement. In contrast, South African Black theology emerged in a radically different spiritual, social, and political climate with circumstances, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, that promoted the emergence of the South African Black theology movement to defeat apartheid. Its vision was not only embraced by Black South Africans, but by members of the world community.

Cone's Black theology articulates to the Black church and to a diverse Christian community that the church is

United to Serve Humanity (Operation PUSH), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), held the nonviolent marches and protests advocated by King's philosophy.

responsible for the work of Christ. He asserts:

Because the church is the community that participates in Jesus Christ's liberating work in history, it can never endorse "law and order" that causes suffering. To do so is to say yes to structures of oppression. Because the church has received the gospel-hint and has accepted what that means for human existence, the church must be a revolutionary community, breaking laws that destroy persons. It believes (with Reinhold Niebuhr) that "comfortable classes may continue to dream of an automatic progress in society. They do not suffer enough from social injustice to recognize its peril in the life of society."¹⁴

The Gospel of Christ is the source of authority of this ethic of liberation from which Black theology derives. The church, as the agent of Christ, clearly becomes the only institution in which a liberation movement can emerge and be cultivated into a powerful force for transformation and hope. The church is the force of Christ in the world and its essential purpose is to function as an advocate for the oppressed.

Noel Erskine writes about Cone's ecclesiology of Black power to flush out Cone's understanding of how the Black church in particular, and the Christian church as a whole, should function in an effort to fight for the liberation of the oppressed. According to Erskine,

Cone affirms the Black church as the home of theology. Because he was immensely influenced by Karl Barth, there was no doubt in his mind that theology is accountable to the church and must serve the needs of the church. But what especially fascinated him was that he found

¹⁴James Cone, A Black Theology of Liberation, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1986), 130.

historical precedents for the Black church to be the locus and the focus of a revolutionary theology. This was important to Cone because his passion was to relate Black power to the Black church.¹⁵

This indicates that Black theology at its early developmental stages set forth to function as an instrument to empower the church for the initiation of a movement to do the work of Christ.

James Cone, in his book, A Black Theology of Liberation, argues that theology should not become a separate entity from the community to which it belongs. It emerges from and is grounded in the truth and meaning of that community's experience. It is the task of theology to inform the community of the truth of its historical existence and what the implications of this spiritual, social, political, and economic realities mean in each generation in order to keep the struggle for liberation focused and alive. According to Cone, if a community does not embrace the above mentioned discourse, it is a community "that does not care what it says or does. It is a community with no identity."¹⁶

Cone has been a genius at defining how Black theology should function in the Black church and ultimately in the African-American community to bring liberation. The problem is that a national movement did not emerge even though the

¹⁵Erskine, 92.

¹⁶Cone, Black Theology of Liberation, 8-9.

Black church is the agent of Christ where the institutionalization of Cone's Black power christology can take place. Black theology did not bring unity among African Americans or stimulate an impassioned discourse to fight the complex battle to defeat racism. According to Cone, it is a necessary task of theology to inform the community to which it belongs in order to keep committed followers in an ongoing struggle against oppression.¹⁷ Did Cone's theology do this at its emergence? It identified racism as public enemy number one, but it did not establish a clearly defined function for the church to attack racism and kill it once and for all. The battle to destroy racism is a difficult task in the U.S. because it is deeply etched into the souls of some White people and is being projected and perpetuated daily through the images and symbols of U.S. society and in the White church. It is for this reason that this project contends that addressing solely the large scope of racism without any specificity did not provide enough focus to unify the diverse African-American community around a Black power liberation movement wrapped in christology. There are too many areas in U.S. society adversely affected by racism, and to simply attack the broad scope of racism is to spread any movement too thin. When an attack is made by any oppressed group on such a broad scope issue as racism in the U.S., the passion will diminish in such an overwhelming

¹⁷Cone, Black Theology of Liberation, 8-9.

struggle and the interest, determination, and power of the masses will wane because it will become evident to them that they are in a loose loose situation. Then, the struggle for liberation becomes an individual fight rather than a collective struggle. The pursuit of self-interest tends to replace collective struggle. There is another danger when this becomes a reality: a rise in individualism that tends to take the form of capitalistic self-interest, which gives a new challenge to Black theology and the development of a liberation movement. Racism must be fought in small segments and each little battle won is a step towards winning the overall war. What Black theology should have done and must do now is to inform the African-American community of the segment of the community most devastated by racism. Cone is correct where he holds that the task of theology is to stir the masses by defining the enemy to them in order to generate committed activists to start a liberation movement.¹⁸ This has not happened. This brings this chapter to the discussion of what the focus for the African-American community and Black theology should be as we move towards the twenty-first century.

Although there are numerous African-American institutions, communities, families, and individuals suffering as a result of the present state of the U.S. economy, the proposed solution offered by the politics of

¹⁸Cone, Black Theology of Liberation, 9.

both liberals and conservatives, and many African-Americans, has been a divisive individualism rooted in capitalism. The failure of Black theology to empower the African-American church with a focused plan of action to initiate a movement has left the African-American youth most devastated and out of the loop. This group of young people born in the late 1960s, 70s, and 80s have too few individuals, politicians, or religious leaders advocating their interest, although a small number of African-American churches have strong programs for the liberation of this group. Consequently, many in this group of young African-Americans have found their niche in U.S. society through nontraditional means with which they often cross the boundary of immoral behavior. The failure of government leaders to advocate economic investment plans to stimulate the economy of the African-American community along with the spiritual and moral disposition of this group, and the unfocused agenda of the church and Black theology continue to perpetuate a vicious cycle of poverty, criminal activity, drug trafficking and use, gang violence, teenage pregnancy, the deterioration of the educational system, family violence and abuse, joblessness and a widespread disinterest in obtaining a job, low self-esteem, and a disproportionate number enrolled in some aspect of the U.S. criminal justice or prison systems. This reality is a manifestation of the unfortunate state of the African-American youth. Therefore,

the necessary task of Black theology is to voice the despair of this group and inform the African-American church and community of the implications of this oppression in order to build unity to start a new liberation movement with committed followers. As described above, there are many complex issues related to this despair of the youth. Today the focus is not Jim Crow laws as it was in the 1950s and 60s or on apartheid as it was in South Africa, but on the youth. The youth is not the enemy; they are the victims and consequently the necessary focus of concern and the point of departure for the initiation of a new liberation movement. This brings the argument to the point of identifying the public enemy number one of the African-American community with regard to the youth.

The social and spiritual environment described above has had a powerful impact on these young African-Americans' worldview, moral outlook, spiritual growth, and social activity. They emerge from this environment desperately wanting acceptance and personal achievement but are hindered by their circumstances. Numerous anthropologists and sociologists believe that humanity creates culture and culture shapes human personality formation. Therefore, millions of youth emerge from this social despair with economic emotional anxiety, and rage toward society, believing they are in a lone fight for survival. They believe that in order to obtain their share of the American

dream, it is necessary to employ any means. For the youth this means participating in an illegal and underground economy. The pursuit of an education is often alienated by this social despair to the point that it does not seem to be a logical or feasible course for them to take. This social reality in turn only aggravates the economic and spiritual anxiety, the rage and protest against society, and the deep sense of being alone and unheard by society, which leads millions of this group to develop what this project will call the Destructive Capitalistic Personality Complex or DCPC. This complex is rooted in anger, individualism, often immorality, and a feeling of being unheard by society. This Destructive Capitalistic Personality Complex is the African-American community's public enemy number one and the environment that is responsible for the emergence of the DCPC is its twin crisis. Black theology can initiate a new liberation movement in the African-American community if it pursues a strategic plan of action focusing on the DCPC and the environment from which it emerged. The Million Man March initiated awareness and activism among the youth and now Black theology must get to the center of this action and articulate to the African-American community how to expand this momentum, creating unity and a powerful liberation movement to bring hope to this group.

The South African Black theology movement identified apartheid as public enemy number one and South Africans at

the grass roots adopted it. Consequently, apartheid no longer exists in South Africa. In the U.S., Black theology now has the same potential if it passionately focuses on the DCPC. This project argues that a liberation movement with a discourse on the Destructive Capitalistic Personality Complex as the public enemy number one is attainable and will provide hope for the youth; it will simultaneously address issues of racism that affect many other persons who are not a part of this group, and inspire African-Americans at the grass roots to activism. A liberation movement centered around the aforementioned argument in its entirety has the potential to do in the U.S. what the Black theology movement did to apartheid in South Africa.

The Different Socio-Political Backgrounds of South African and African-American Theologies

The historical background of the African-American struggle in the U.S. for socio-political liberation was distinctly different than its South African counterpart. That is to say, the cultural oppressions in each society emerged from a completely different set of circumstances with uniquely different histories. This historic difference had a great deal to do with the vision, focus, function, and discourse that each of the respective Black theologies emerged with to reach the same goal of total liberation.

African-Americans were first brought to the U.S. to South Carolina in 1526 by Spanish settlers. They refused to

be enslaved and escaped into the interior parts of the United States of America, where they soon settled with Native Americans. However, during the early 1600s the system of slavery was instituted in the English colonies. Millions of Africans were brought to the United States to be slaves. In 1863 President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation declaring the end to slavery in the United States. However, an oppressive segregationist socio-political system kept African-Americans from fully participating in the political process. The fact that African-Americans have historically represented only thirteen percent of the U.S. population made the struggle for liberation extremely difficult in the U.S. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s restored full civil rights to African-Americans in spite of their minority status and developed significant ideologies in the areas of theology and political philosophy. In contrast, South African Blacks were the majority, and this strengthened their struggle against apartheid significantly. These facts are significant to the overall success of the liberation movements for Blacks in both countries.

South African Blacks, the majority, existed in a state of total freedom within an African cultural context until their land was invaded by European settlers. These Europeans instituted the system of slavery by importing West Africans in the mid to late 1600s. This system lasted until

1834, approximately forty years after the British took control of the Cape region of South Africa. The people known today as the Cape Colors are the descendants of West African slaves who intermixed with European settlers. The Dutch (Boers) defeated the native South Africans in a territorial war and founded Natal, Transvaal, and the Orange Free State territories.¹⁹

The British proceeded to expand their control over some of the areas previously ruled by the Dutch. This created much tension between them. A war between the British and the Dutch emerged, which the British won in 1902. But by 1910 a unified South Africa was formed. However, the Dutch eventually took total control of South Africa and instituted the system of apartheid that remained until 1992.

The South African Black theology movement emerged in the late 1960s and early 70s calling for Black unity after hundreds of years of oppression and 49 years of some form of apartheid. While African-Americans had some civil rights, South African Blacks were living in the midst of totally dehumanizing socio-political conditions. When the South African Black theology movement emerged, the South African government was aggressively oppressing South African Blacks by enforcing the laws of apartheid, intensifying the resentment of South African Blacks. By contrast, the U.S.

¹⁹Harry A. Ploski and James Williams, eds., The Negro Almanac: A Reference Work on the African American, 5th ed. (New York: Gale Research, 1989), 1507.

government at this time was making advances in civil rights for African-Americans; laws such as the Voting Rights Act improved the participation of African-Americans in the U.S. political and process. However, the liberating ideas and strategic protest plans of King's nonviolent direct action movement and Malcolm's Black power movement actually complemented each other, and became significant forces that made the above civil rights gains possible. It is important to clarify that the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s utilized the Constitution of the United States of America, specifically the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments, as well as other provisions in the U.S. Constitution that pertained to the full citizenship of African-Americans. However, apartheid in South Africa was doing the opposite to South African Blacks; it was a political system designed to keep Blacks from being recognized as full and equal citizens. But even without any constitution on their side the Black majority in South Africa was able to wage a successful war against apartheid. Additionally, many institutions and people joined South African Blacks in the struggle against apartheid. The civil rights gains of African-Americans of the past forty years can be likened with the 1992 dismantling of apartheid in the sense that the struggle is not over in either country, and that each liberation movement gained the support of many of different race, nationality, and oppressive experience.

Furthermore, while the U.S. Black minority had the U.S. Constitution on its side, the South African Black majority advocated the creation of a new constitution to both end apartheid and establish full human and civil rights for Blacks.

As previously mentioned, U.S. Black theology emerged during a time of tremendous socio-political gains. This was a time when many African-Americans were still enjoying the successes of the Civil Rights Movement, which bred some degree of complacency. This contributed to the failure of the emergence and development of any significant movement for liberation in the past two decades. In contrast, South African Black theology emerged when Black South Africans were hungry for liberation. The word "apartheid" itself described the inhuman conditions of Black South Africans so accurately that it (the word "apartheid") generated Black unity, giving the movement a clear vision, focus, and function. As discussed earlier, even the world community embraced the vision of South African Black theology to eliminate apartheid. The anti-apartheid movement gained international support.

CHAPTER 2

The Threat to African-American Youth:

The Destructive Capitalistic Personality Complex

Introduction

The Destructive Capitalistic Personality Complex (DCPC) is the number one threat to the African-American community and to the youth in particular. The socio-spiritual culture in which these young persons born in the late 1960s, 70s, and early 80s emerged in is the DCPC's twin in this crisis. The DCPC is not a psychological trait or personality disorder inherited through ones family genes. Rather, it is obtained through an oppressive socialization process and numerous factors aid its development.

The DCPC is the number one threat to the African-American community. With its worldview, it provides core values that determine the way one thinks and acts. Thousands of young persons have these values for economic survival which alienate them from the notion of individual responsibility to help bring harmony, wholeness, and liberation to the African-American experience; adopting these values has left them without spiritual awareness, which has been profoundly destructive and devastating to the African-American community. A cycle of oppression sets forth, causing the development of the underclass, dysfunctional families, violence, and crime. The DCPC manifests itself in the youth as a survival mechanism that

brings with it certain values in the youth's search for meaning in a capitalistic society rooted in racism, individualism, social and spiritual despair, and family dysfunction. In his book, Race Matters, Cornell West describes the nihilism which is widespread among the African-American community. He asserts,

Nihilism is to be understood here not as a philosophic doctrine that there are no rational grounds for legitimate standards or authority; it is, far more, the lived experience of coping with a life of horrifying meaninglessness, hopelessness, and (most important) lovelessness. The frightening result is a numbing detachment from others and a self-destructive disposition toward the world. Life without meaning, hope, and love breeds a cold-hearted, mean-spirited outlook that destroys both the individual and others.¹

This project concurs with West's understanding of nihilism. However, some individuals respond differently to this socio-spiritual despair, and emerge living a spiritually and morally meaningful life under the worst of social circumstances with a strong sense of spiritual meaning as was evidenced in slavery, and is being evidenced in society today among many elderly, middle-aged, and young persons who live in the same despair. But many African-American youths, predominantly male, respond to this despair with aggression, protest, and a plan of action to survive and succeed at any cost. The end result is an inhuman temperament and a self-destructive way of living in order to achieve a sense of

¹Cornel West, Race Matters (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 14-15.

success as defined by capitalism with no regard for others and no moral boundaries; this project calls this the Destructive Capitalistic Personality Complex, or the DCPC. The demand, "I just want to get paid," becomes the principle by which these individuals live their lives. The DCPC is the result when people see themselves as victims who are left out of the loop in a society that treats them with indifference. They believe that society left them to fend for themselves with no resources. The DCPC allows them to achieve a sense of immediate economic and social gratification in the here and now. The DCPC gives them an overwhelming sense of power and pride, respect among peers, and inspires them to become skilled in this dangerous way of life; for many this status and sense of somebodiness are better than what they had before, which was only social oppression. The DCPC tends to make its victims believe that the life that they have adopted is the only viable alternative for survival. However, a sense of success grounded in immorality and destruction is short-lived.

Spiritual awareness, love from family and community, and education from church and school are the things that ultimately give meaning, purpose, and hope to life. They help form one's values, moral outlook, and sense of esteem and belonging. These things in turn lay the foundation that will determine one's course in life. The lack of meaning results in despair and leaves many vulnerable to the

influences of the socio-spiritual despair that is widespread in the African-American community. The DCPC is the number one threat to the overall healing and economic development of the African-American community because it brings hundreds of thousands of young and vulnerable persons to an aggressive search for economic hope. But these youth fall into a life of crime, violence, prostitution, and other illegal activities as they live by the attitude, "I just want to get paid." There is no other threat in the African-American community that has devastated the family, the church, and schools during the past two decades as the DCPC has done; it has been destructive in all areas of black existence. Historically, racism was destructive, but it did not destroy the strong spiritual awareness and moral responsibility that survived the worst racist social and economic circumstances. The DCPC destroys the youth's hope for the future through the destruction of core spiritual and moral values; it also promotes violence among African-Americans. The DCPC is adversely affecting the key institutions that promote spiritual meaning and stability in the African-American community.

This chapter sets forth to argue that the DCPC is the number one threat to the African-American community, and that its twin crisis is widespread nihilism, which makes the birth of the DCPC possible. This chapter will utilize some of the ideas of Deborah Prothrow-Stith and Michaela Weissman

as written in their book, Deadly Consequences, which pertain to the origin of youth violence in the African-American community and which support the argument of this chapter that violence has become a national epidemic among young African-American males.² This chapter will focus its argument by: first, examining the source of the African-American youth's anger and the motive when this widespread anger manifests itself in violence, and how the DCPC is related to this widespread violence and nihilism; second, by examining how drug trafficking in the African-American community is linked to widespread violence among the youth, and the development of the DCPC.

Nihilism and the DCPC: A National Epidemic

The widespread violence and crime among young African-Americans across the U.S. significantly demonstrate the magnitude of widespread self-destruction. How did this social despair become a national crisis and what is the solution to it? This chapter will argue that widespread violence among the African-American youth is a result of the DCPC undergirded by a powerful drug culture and gang activity at work when the hopeless try to find hope and a niche in society by any means necessary. That is, drug trafficking and abuse create a social despair conducive to the development of a self-centered mindset which perpetuates

²Deborah Prothrow-Stith and Michaela Weissman, Deadly Consequences (New York: HarperPerennial, 1991), 6.

violence and crime. A mean-spirited and cold-hearted attitude are the prerequisites for the DCPC. When a youth acquires the DCPC, an immoral and self-serving worldview replaces spirituality and previous moral values. There are no ethical boundaries in the quest for material gain. Working to eliminate the DCPC with both spiritual values and practical action is the solution to the problem.

Deborah Prothrow-Stith points out that youth violence in the African-American community has become a national epidemic and the number one cause of death of poor African-American males. She claims that social despair and the ghetto culture in which these youths live have a profound influence on their psyche and is the root cause of their angry and rampant self-destruction.³ Prothrow-Stith maintains that this anger results from a sense of hopelessness and meaninglessness. That is, being poor in an America where acquiring wealth is regarded with utmost importance further alienates many and reinforces the development of their anger. Additionally, being a victim of racism, attending a school where one's intelligence level is often prejudged as being below the norm, and facing a future without professional fulfillment or of joblessness are the factors which lead an African-American youth to anger.⁴ She asserts:

³Prothrow-Stith and Weissman, 6.

⁴Prothrow-Stith and Weissman, 6.

I intuitively believed that the social context was as important as the family setting. Moreover, I sensed that the social setting could play a role in a young person's failing to develop adequate ways to handle his own aggression. Living in a violent environment in which aggressive outbursts were common, I tended to think, could encourage displays of aggression that in another, more peaceful environment might well have been contained.⁵

The environment in which many young African-Americans live is one of social despair which results from the notion that being wealthy is important. This project concurs with Prothrow's assessment that living in hopeless and meaningless social conditions in an America where great value is placed upon wealth results in resentment in many African-American youths. They also aspire to be affirmed and valued and to experience the same sense of somebodiness and achievement as defined by American society, which places prime importance on succeeding in a competitive capitalistic culture. However, the likelihood of these youths becoming economically successful through legitimate means is limited by poor education, the lack of role models, and the lack of encouragement and information from family. Prothrow-Stith suggests that the social despair prevalent in the environment is the primary reason for the violence of the African-American youth. As poor persons in a society where wealthy persons are valued and poor persons are not, they become angry and aggressive. Prothrow needs to take her

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⁵Prothrow-Stith and Weissman, 6.

argument to the next step, that these angry young men, just like anyone else, need a sense of achievement. Furthermore, much of their violence are necessary for survival. The youth's search for achievement and survival often lead them outside the mainstream economy and society. These young African-Americans believe that they live in a racist society in which the rules of the game are written in a language that they cannot understand or speak, in which they are discriminated against and are not afforded an equal opportunity, and in which they cannot acquire the wealth necessary for a sense of worth. Consequently, for many the alternative road to wealth is crime.

Violence is responsible for 20,000 homicide deaths each year and for leaving many others severely injured in the United States. Many of these victims are young and poor African-Americans.⁶ The former Surgeon General of the U.S. from 1981-1989, Dr. C. Everett Koop, in the introduction ~~of~~ ^{to} ~~Prothrow and Weissman's book~~, Deadly Consequences, maintains that in 1984 he startled many Americans when he adopted the public health policy that violence is as much a public health issue for physicians as many dangerous diseases.⁷

I concur with Prothrow's notion that violent behavior tends to emerge from social despair and an environment in which violence is a daily occurrence. But this project goes

⁶Prothrow-Stith and Weissman, 2.

⁷Prothrow-Stith and Weissman, xvii.

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a step further by contending that the lack of spirituality and the importance placed upon wealth is the deadly combination responsible for much violence. I maintain that from the widespread social despair, the racism that causes joblessness and leaves many with a deep sense of rejection and victimization by society, the importance placed upon wealth, the sense of being alone in a competitive capitalistic system, and, most important, the lack of spirituality necessary to maintain a sense of wholeness and somebodiness in the midst of overwhelming despair leave these young persons vulnerable. This is when the DCPC appears to be the only alternative. People who have the Destructive Capitalistic Personality Complex (DCPC) employ violence to obtain material things and a sense of worth.

The Drug Business and the DCPC in Action

The rise of drug abuse and trafficking in the African-American community is responsible for the development of widespread social despair and nihilism which has caused an ongoing cycle of crime, violence, gang activity, teenage pregnancy, and family brokenness. These are all the end results of the DCPC. The drug trade is a huge business in the U.S., generating billions of dollars each year. Large amounts of crack cocaine are concentrated in African-American neighborhoods across the country, and many youths enter this business in an effort to fulfill their dreams of gaining a sense of value by earning a big amount of fast

money. Many of these young people live in poor neighborhoods where the drug business is prevalent, violence is a daily occurrence, and the fast rewards and glamour of the drug trade are more attractive than legitimate ways to find meaning, hope, love, a sense of value, and a livelihood. For these young men money means a sense of worth and respect in their neighborhoods. However, most die young or become incarcerated. Prothrow and Weissman provide evidence that death, prison, or serious physical injury are the end results of involvement in the drug business.

Prothrow writes about the tragic life of a young New York City drug dealer, Preston Simmons, who was shot with a 9-millimeter automatic pistol nine times by four young men who were rival drug dealers as he walked from his girlfriend's house to his house.⁸ The DCPC is evidenced in such violent outbursts when money and drugs are the motive.

Prothrow asserts:

The booming traffic in illicit drugs, most especially cocaine and its derivatives, has introduced near anarchy into hundreds of poor urban areas all over the country. In these beleaguered neighborhoods drug dealers have cowed and silenced the majority of poor and working people. . . . The simplest assumptions of civilized life--that parent and child will be able to walk down the street unmolested, that a child will return home safely from school are denied them. Their reality is automatic weapons fire, shootouts, crossfires, and

⁸Prothrow-Stith and Weissman, 111.

the fear of stray bullets.⁹

This project concurs with Prothrow on how the drug business has endangered African-American social existence, but goes a step further. It proposes that a specific entity, the DCPC, is largely responsible for the development of the drug business in the African-American community. The DCPC emerges in a search for meaning and wealth. Many young persons pursue this self-destructive path because it is the only means to wealth that appears feasible. Additionally, Prothrow makes the argument, and this project concurs, that the drug problem must be understood from a broad perspective because it adversely affects all areas of social existence. It is a job problem, a housing problem, a family problem, and a spiritual and moral problem.

The Crack Cocaine-CIA-Los Angeles Gangs Connection

The crack cocaine epidemic that exploded in African-American communities in the 1980s brought with it a profound nihilism: Gang-related violence spread rapidly as many gangs were able to organize themselves, earn large sums of money, gain access to weapons, and control whole neighborhoods as their territory. Neighborhoods became war zones when there were territorial disputes between opposing gangs, and African-Americans were nearly always the victims and the perpetrators. The despair that this drug activity has created has left an African-American generation ignorant of

⁹Prothrow-Stith and Weissman, 113.

the spiritual values that sustained the community from slavery to the civil rights struggle of the 1960s. Prior to the 1980s cocaine was the drug of the rich, but, according to court documents and journalist Gary Webb, a new marketing strategy to create a more addictive form (crack), lower its cost, and target African-American poor neighborhoods across the U.S. was the work of a man named Danilo Blandon.¹⁰ Webb maintains that for almost a decade, a powerful drug ring connected to the Central Intelligence Agency and led by Blandon sold tons of cocaine to the Los Angeles gangs, the Crips and the Bloods, to finance the CIA-backed Contras in a war in Nicaragua against the Sandinista government. According to Webb, Blandon gathered his wife and young daughter and flew into exile in California on June 19, 1979, after the Sandinista guerrillas pulled off one of the biggest military upsets in Central American history in the volcanic hills of Managua, Nicaragua, and took control of the government. Court records show that Blandon started raising funds to buy weapons and equipment for a guerrilla army named the Fuerza Democratica Nicaraguense or (FDN) better known as the Contras. Gary Webb's articles have drawn national attention to the possibility of an organized scheme to develop a highly addictive drug and market it specifically to African-Americans. Blandon revealed that he

¹⁰Gary Webb, "'Crack' Plague's Roots are in Nicaraguan War," San Jose Mercury News, 18-20 Aug. 1996, (6).

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worked with the CIA. Webb wrote:

"There is a saying that the ends justify the means," former FDN leader and drug dealer Oscar Danilo Blandon Reyes testified during a recent cocaine trafficking trial in San Diego. "And that's what Mr. Bermudes (the CIA agent who commanded the FDN) told us in Honduras, okay? So we started raising money for the Contra revolution."¹¹

According to Webb, Blandon testified in a San Diego court that he began dealing crack in South-Central Los Angeles in 1982 and that the first kilo of cocaine he sold in California was to raise funds for the CIA's army and mission to overthrow the Sandinista government. Blandon was introduced by a Nicaraguan named Henry Corrales, one of his customers, to Rick Ross, alias Freeway Rick. After Ross met Blandon he developed a network of friends in South-Central Los Angeles and Compton, mainly from the gangs Crips and Bloods, and built a large clientele, eventually selling 2 million to 3 million dollars worth of crack cocaine each day. Ross' business outgrew all other dealers' in the Los Angeles area because he could sell his crack well below the market value. If a kilo was selling for 20,000 dollars Ross would sell his for 10,000 dollars, and no other dealers could compete with his low prices. Webb wrote:

Before long, Blandon was giving Ross hundreds of kilos of cocaine on consignment--sell now, pay later--a strategy that dramatically accelerated the empire, even

¹¹Webb, 6.

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beyond California's borders. . . . Ross states, "Our biggest problem had got to be counting the money. We got to the point where it was like, man, we don't want to count no more money."¹²

While under oath during the San Diego trial, Rick Ross stated that he and his gang associates had their own arsenal of weapons. He added that Blandon tried to sell him and his associates a grenade launcher. Rick Ross purchased large amounts of weapons from Blandon for distribution to Los Angeles gangs to protect his interest in their drug operations. Rick Ross, with millions in capital and powerful weapons to protect his business, became the largest crack dealer in Los Angeles and was able to expand his businesses to Cincinnati, St. Louis, and other cities across the U.S. He was also able to recruit many young men in an effort to build large drug operations primarily ran by gangs.

Gary Webb's investigation of Blandon's connection to Ross and to the gangs of Los Angeles is recorded in court records and the testimonies of certain witnesses who came forth at Blandon's trial. Blandon's destructive capitalistic strategy to raise money to purchase weapons for the Contras by exploiting the African-American community, targeting it with the most addictive street drug, crack cocaine, is also a matter of public record. To protect his large drug operation Blandon conducted his business

¹²Webb, 6.

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associates in developing sophisticated security systems, which included weapons, communication gear, and hidden microphone detectors to detect undercover law enforcement authorities and other intruders. Ross's trials have revealed these facts: (1) crack was intentionally developed as a more addictive and cheaper form of cocaine and was introduced to the U.S. in the 1980s in South Central Los Angeles; (2) crack was developed and introduced to the U.S. for the purpose of raising money for the Contras; (3) there was a plan to target the marketing of crack to African-American neighborhoods; and (4) the crack business has aided in the organization and finance of gang activity in the African-American community in cities across the U.S.

During the late 1960s and early 70s the Black Power Movement led numerous initiatives in Oakland, Chicago, and other major cities across the U.S. to keep drugs out of the African-American community, but their effort to stop drugs from coming into the African-American community ended with the organization's demise. The demise of the Black Power Movement in the late 1970s has left poor African-American neighborhoods vulnerable to increased drug abuse and trafficking.

Rick Ross and his gang associates, who made millions by destroying African-American youths, are evidence of the Destructive Capitalistic Personality Complex. The DCPC is the number one threat to the African-American community

because it has replaced spiritual values with destructive and materialistic values. Nihilism in the African-American community exploded in the 1980s when the crack business and its violence invaded the African-American community through urban gangs.

The large cash flow and the sense of identity gangs provided made them attractive to young men. According to Prothrow, the drug business has become a major employer of the young in cities across the nation.¹³ They work as look outs, warning dealers that the police have been spotted. They work as stash guards, guarding stored drugs. They work as layaways, holding drugs. They work as touts, promoting a dealer's brand of drugs. They work as delivery boys, transporting drugs. These young people have the potential to earn hundreds of dollars a day, a fact that attracts many. The consequences to the African-American community are indicated by the following statistics from the 1996 edition of Black Americans: A Statistical Sourcebook. There were 3.7 million African-Americans arrested in 1994 and 288,133 of these arrests were for violent crimes; 10,420 were murders, and 62,628 were committed by African-Americans under the age of 18, according to the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation. According to the U.S. Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, as of 31 December 1993, 456,570 African-Americans were incarcerated in prisons; 426,401 were being

¹³Prothrow-Stith and Weissman, 111.

housed in state institutions, and 30,169 in federal institutions. African-Americans make up less than 13 percent of the U.S. population, but about 48 percent of the prison population.¹⁴

Black theology must empower the African-American church with a strategy and plan of action to increase spiritual awareness in order to lead the entire African-American family in a spiritual liberation movement to destroy the DCPC by transforming the youth with spiritual and moral values. Prothrow's argument is from the public health perspective, and public health bears a responsibility to take necessary steps to prevent further violence through intervention. However, Black theology and the Black church have the most important role in an effort to destroy the African-American community's public enemy number one, the DCPC with a practical plan of action. The future of many youths hinge on how the African-American church and community will respond to this threat. The problem with Black theology is that it has focused on the social transformation at the expense of spiritual and moral development. This project will supplement Black theology by developing a practical plan of action to assist the church in the crisis of the African-American youth. This project will propose a solution to the crisis in the final chapter.

¹⁴Louise L. Hornor, ed., Black Americans: A Statistical Sourcebook (Palo Alto, Calif.: Information Publications, 1994), 184-87.

CHAPTER 3

U.S. Black Theology: A Historical Perspective

This project's focus is on the Destructive Capitalistic Personality Complex's (DCPC) threat to the African-American youth and the liberation of the African-American community. However, it is necessary to demonstrate the role of Black theology in the African-American community's historic struggle against oppression in order to aid the Black church in the development of a strategic plan of action to attack the public enemy number one, the DCPC, from the Black theology perspective and tradition. Therefore, this chapter sets forth to tell the story of Black theology's historical roots, its initial purpose and focus, and to discuss different types of Black theology by: first, examining the events of the 1960s and how Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement, Malcolm X and the Black Muslim movement, and the Black Power movement of the 1960s all influenced the development of U.S. Black theology; and second, by examining the unique contributions of two types of Black theology, Womanist theology and theology of the church.

Influences on the Black Theology of the 1960s

Historical Roots of U.S.

Black Theology

U.S. Black theology emerged during the 1960s to challenge the theological and ethical positions of Western

theology, and in response to the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power Movement of the 1960s. In his book, A Common Journey: Black Theology (USA) and Latin American Liberation Theology, George L. Cummings asserts that Black theology is grounded in the history of the political, economic, social, and human sufferings of African-Americans, and cannot be understood or evaluated apart from that history. The African-American community's determination and capacity to understand christology in light of its experience of suffering and oppression in the U.S. empowered its search for meaning and hope. Consequently, Black theology emerged in the 1960s as a product of African-American faith in response to a history of struggle and oppression.¹

The 1960s in the U.S. was the decade of restlessness and aggressive protests for liberation of African-Americans and the emergence of a Black theology that gave voice and a plan of action to social, political, and economic concerns that were a part of the African-American experience of suffering since slavery. The struggles in the 1960s merely built upon a religious tradition with roots in slavery that embraced God as liberator. The faith tradition that held that all human beings were created equal, and that slavery or any form of injustice were not in the will of God, started in the midst of sweltering oppression on the slave

¹George Cummings, A Common Journey: Black Theology (USA) and Latin American Liberation Theology (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993), 1.

plantations; it was the faith tradition upon which Black theology was initiated. George Cummings asserts:

From the very beginning of their enslavement in white Christian America, blacks began to reflect on the meaning of their faith in the light of their religious experience, and to assert that slavery was not Christian. Indeed, black religion, understood as all those religio-cultural sensibilities and values-- African, European, and American, functioned as the fulcrum of protest against black oppression black slaves sought to understand their faith and to find the resources for survival.²

The emergence of Black theology in the 1960s and its continued development into a universally acclaimed theology, expanding into new arenas with fresh ideas and addressing important issues on behalf of the oppressed with new approaches and methods for liberation, would not be possible were it not rooted in this strong faith tradition. This faith tradition has been an important factor in the development of strong families, churches, and institutions in the African-American community, and is one source of strength that social degradation has been unable to destroy. A faith tradition that was able to critique a racist christology without formal theological training was a unique accomplishment. This is not to suggest that the slaves constructed a formal Black theology. However, they initiated a faith tradition that for several centuries has

²Cummings, 3.

empowered the African-American struggle for justice and has been a positive spiritual force in the Black experience. This project concurs with Cummings that it was because the slaves interpreted their faith in light of their oppression that they were able find resources for survival. However, this project goes a step further, asserting that the slaves were able to establish and pass on a faith tradition that would empower and sustain them and succeeding generations in numerous struggles for liberation.

In his book, Xodus: An African-American Male Journey, Garth Baker-Fletcher argues that certain slaves were theologically sophisticated in their biblical exegesis and in their practice of the strong faith tradition that was started by slaves. Baker-Fletcher states that a former slave, Henry Bibb wrote to his former slave owner, Albert Sibley, using biblical authority to argue against the institution of slavery and to critique the Methodist church. Bibb wrote:

While on the other hand your church sanctions the buying and selling of men, women, and children; the robbing of men of their wives, and parents of their off-spring--the violation of the whole of the decalogue, by permitting the profanation of the Sabbath; committing of theft, murder, incest, and adultery, which is constantly done by church members holding slaves and form the very essence of slavery. Now, Sir, allow me with the greatest deference to your intelligence to inform you that you are miserably deceiving yourself, if you believe that you are in the straight and narrow path to heaven, whilst you are

practicing such abominable violations of the plainest precepts of religion.³

Bibbs' written critique of the Methodist church and his former slave master is one example among many that supports the position of this chapter, that the theological thinking of many slaves, which was rooted in a radical faith tradition, was sophisticated to say the least. The faith tradition that African-Americans inherited from their slave ancestors continues to shape African-American religious experience today; it is at the core of Black theological thinking and religious practice and will remain a central part of each of these experiences because African-Americans remain a people who understand their oppression in light of their faith tradition. Additionally, this slave faith tradition played a key role in inspiring revolts and movements against slavery and oppression as evidenced by the actions of men such as Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner. They were key subjects in the formation of the Black theology that emerged in the 1960s, and in the 1990s as well.

Black Theology in Action:

Martin Luther King, Jr.

and the Civil Rights Movement

The Black theology practiced by Martin Luther King, Jr.

³Quoted in Garth Baker-Fletcher, Xodus: An African American Male Journey (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 52.

during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s emerged in writing in the late 1960s and continues to shape and influence Black theology in the 1990s. It was a theology rooted in the same faith tradition that was shaped and cultivated by African-American slaves who understood God as liberator. The Civil Rights Movement which was led by Martin Luther King, Jr. was a freedom movement against African-American oppression grounded in the Christian faith, the same faith tradition of slave ancestors. The radical faith grounded in the love ethic of Christ practiced by King and his followers challenged white Christianity, the Constitution of the U.S., the racist practices of the U.S. government, and made a prophetic call for African-American churches to put into action the values of a strong faith tradition that opposes oppression. In his book, God Of The Oppressed, James Cone makes the point that King's fight against oppression was rooted in the religious tradition of his slave ancestors. Cone asserts:

The identification of divine justice with civil justice became the central theme of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 60s. This identification was consistent with black religious tradition and with the Bible. To justify his fight against injustice, Martin Luther King, Jr. referred not only to the Exodus and Jesus Christ but especially to the prophets of the Old Testament.⁴

⁴James Cone, God of the Oppressed (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 154.

This project concurs with Cone that King's fight for freedom and justice for African-Americans was grounded in the strong faith tradition of suffering African-Americans. King was in the same religious tradition of many African-American ministers and activists who had fought against African-American oppression as far back as slavery. King was in the same religious tradition as Henry Highland Garnet, whose prophetic voice spoke to slaves. Cone asserts that Garnet epitomized the spirit of the black religious tradition when he identified obedience to God with struggling against slavery in an address to slaves. Garnet said:

Your condition does not absolve you from your moral obligation. The diabolical injustice by which your liberties are cloven down, neither God, nor angels, or just men, command you to suffer for a single moment. Therefore, it is your solemn and imperative duty to use every means, both moral, intellectual, and physical, that promises success.⁵

Garnet's prophetic message to slaves is the same message that King spoke to African-Americans. Garnet spoke of the same moral imperative to fight against injustice that King did in the 1960s. King's moral imperative urged European-American Christians to embrace good rather than evil, love rather than hate, justice rather than injustice, and equality rather than discrimination.

In the famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," King informs local white clergy, who urged him to end his protest

⁵Cone, God of the Oppressed, 154.

in Birmingham, that his action and call for the end of injustice and segregation in Birmingham were motivated by and rooted in a Christian faith tradition. King asserts:

I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid. Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.⁶

King's response to the white clergy in Birmingham indicated that his nonviolent protest was not only in harmony with the God of the Christian faith, but that he and his followers were actually inspired by God to resist the evils of American society. He pointed out that his action was grounded in the same gospel and faith tradition as that of the biblical prophets and the Apostle Paul, and was, therefore, no different. King understood Christianity from a theological perspective immersed in the notion that the Christian God of the Bible was directly opposed to injustice, racism, and the inhuman treatment of African-Americans. Additionally, King pointed out that his Christian faith was his moral authority and the basis for

⁶Martin Luther King, Jr., Why We Can't Wait (New York: New American Library, 1964), 77.

teaching his followers that it was Christian to oppose injustice. However, King demonstrated Christian sensitivity by giving his critics his theological and biblical point of view.

This project argues that Black theology must advocate the radical involvement of African-Americans in their community. However, the African-American church is critical in fostering the success of such involvement. If Black theology cannot attract African-American church leaders, it cannot attack the enemy. King correctly attracted church ministers and leaders to the movement, and with their unity they were able to wage a movement against racism. This project maintains that the Civil Rights Movement led by King was in fact Black theology in action, and was successful. The relevance and success of Black theology hinges on its ability to ignite a movement through the participation of the African-American church. Either Black theology has been unable to stimulate this type of involvement or the church has been unwilling to hear its entire message and call for radical involvement. As previously mentioned, the Black theology of the 1960s and early 70s was partially rejected by the church. However, the church adopted parts of its message, but rejected much of its Black Power theology. The church and Black theology are equally responsible for the development of a plan of action to bring liberation to the African-American community. U.S. Black theology needs to

serve the church more meaningfully in the future by proposing a concrete plan of action to oppose an identified public enemy number one rather than racism at large, such as Jim Crowe in the 1960s. This project takes the position that there are shortcomings in both U.S. Black theology and the African-American church. However, the thesis of this work highlights the shortcomings of U.S. Black theology. Additionally, the church model of ministry which will be discussed in more detail later lays out a plan of action for the African-American church rooted in Black theology and the African-American faith traditions. If the church rejects a plan of action that has vision, focus, and a function and advocates unity to attack and destroy an identified number one enemy, the church would be the problem, not U.S. Black theology. Racism is too large a target to attack, which has been Black theology's endeavor since its emergence. This project maintains that the South African Black theology movement's and the 1960's Civil Rights Movement's action-oriented theology can inform U.S. Black theology in its continued fight for spiritual and social transformation.

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Black theology was not only grounded in the same radical religious tradition as that of his slave ancestors, but it was Black theology in the technical and intellectual sense. This fact made King's writings, sermons, and speeches valuable documents for theologians for years to come. When Black theology emerged

in the 1960s King was a key element in its development. Today scholars debate whether King was a theologian in the traditional sense. This project asserts that King's theological training and practical theology set new standards and broke new ground in Black theology. King was a trained theologian who applied his theology to the Civil Rights Movement. In his Ph.D. dissertation at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, "Martin Luther King, Jr. as A Theologian of Radical Involvement," Luther Ivory argues that King was a theologian who advocated a faith of radical involvement against oppression and injustice. Ivory asserts:

King is best understood as a creative theological thinker who offered a theology of radical involvement. King's theological perspective sought to raise permanent, generative tensions for the culture of his day. At the same time, it sought to resolve those tensions in light of a radical, Christian, vision that was thoroughly informed by a notion of "the radicality of involved love". King's social activism was based upon an ethic of community, and this ethic was informed by structured theological formulation on how love radically involves itself in the affairs of human history.⁷

King's Black theology was a departure point for the radical theology that emerged in the 1960s as Black theology. This project concurs with Ivory that King was a theologian who advocated a theology of radical involvement. King's

⁷Luther Ivory, "Martin Luther King, Jr. as a Theologian of Radical Involvement" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1996), 5.

theology of radical involvement was grounded in his radical faith tradition that was started by his slave ancestors and which had a deep understanding of the love ethic of Christ as a radical involved love that would go to great and difficult lengths to liberate humanity and establish the beloved community.

Malcolm X and Radical

Black Power Theology

Black theology emerged in the 1960s in response to the Black Power Movement that was embraced by many African-Americans. The ideas of Malcolm X were at the center of Black Power philosophy, which addressed the issues of Black self-love, Black unity, and racism, stimulating many theological discussions. Ironically, the influence of Malcolm X's ideas reached even people immersed in the Christian faith tradition. If the Black theology of the 1960s had emerged without the philosophy of Malcolm X and the Black Power Movement, it still would have been a valuable Black theology, but without the authentic substance of the Black Power ideology.

In his book, The Common Journey, George Cummings asserts:

While it is important to view Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement as an important factor in the development of BTUSA, BTUSA owes an even greater debt to Malcolm X and the Black Power Movement. BTUSA owes its origin to the struggle for black empowerment amid a world of suffering and

powerlessness, and behind the Black Power Movement stood the presence of El Haj Malik El Shabazz (Malcolm X).⁸

This project concurs with Cummings' assessment that Malcolm X's Black Power ideology had a profound impact on Black theology.

Malcolm was a minister in the Black Muslim religion under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad, but later in life believed in Islamic theology. However, Malcolm X, like Martin Luther King, Jr., was also a product of the Christian faith tradition that was passed on from his slave ancestors. Malcolm and King came from the same faith tradition that understood God as liberator. Malcolm X's father was a Baptist minister who had a Black nationalist view which was profoundly influenced by Marcus Garvey's notion of black nationalism, and Malcolm's early spiritual formation was shaped by Garvey's and his father's views. Malcolm's early religious experience in his home is a profound reality that one must take seriously to understand who Malcolm X was and from what elements his philosophy arose. This chapter asserts that Malcolm X was essentially grounded in the same faith tradition most African-Americans have throughout his life. Malcolm was more mature as a Muslim minister than as a young Baptist, but the fact remains that he learned to understand the oppression of African-Americans in light of his faith tradition, which held God as liberator. The slave

⁸Cummings, 11.

faith tradition opposed oppression in light of their belief that God was a God of justice, liberation, and love. From his Muslim perspective, Malcolm X believed that Allah was a liberator who was against the dehumanization of Black personhood, a belief that was similar to the Black Christian perspective on God. The religions were different, but both were applicable in the fight against the same enemy, racism. Malcolm maintained that African-Americans must use any means necessary to fight for liberation. Malcolm asserts:

The American black man should be focusing his every effort toward building his own businesses, and decent homes for himself. As other ethnic groups have done, let the black people, wherever possible, however possible, patronize their own kind, hire their own kind, and start in those ways to build up the black race's ability to do for itself. That's the only way the American black man is ever going to get respect. One thing the white man never can give the black man is self-respect! . . . The black man needs to start his own program to get rid of drunkenness, drug addiction, prostitution. The black man in America has to lift up his own sense of values.⁹

Black theology, of which Malcolm X's thinking is a part of, is therefore a threat to the status quo of white society.

Malcolm championed the spiritual value of self-love, which he viewed as essential for the liberation of African-Americans regardless of religious faith. His advocacy of self-love was an urgent call for the radical involvement of all African-Americans to increase Black self-respect, dignity, and community building. In his book, Xodus: An

⁹Malcolm X, The Autobiography of Malcolm X (New York: Ballantine Books, 1964), 277-78.

African American Male Journey, Garth Baker-Fletcher expounds on Malcolm's notion of self-love. He asserts:

Malcolm believed that self-respect had been systematically stripped away from American Blacks by the European-American system of racism, or the collective white man. Malcolm dramatized in vivid language the way in which the "white man" had brutalized, raped, and robbed the "black man" of self-respect, pride, and dignity. In fact, according to Malcolm, the "white man" literally brainwashed African people into "so called Negroes." The "Negro," according to Malcolm, had become sickened psychologically, spiritually, emotionally, economically, and politically by accepting self-hatred into our collective psyche.¹⁰

The central theme of Malcolm's vision, message, and mission was a call for the radical involvement of African-Americans in a united struggle for liberation by embracing Black self-love and self-respect. Malcolm believed that the racist U.S. society had imposed the worst and profoundest oppression of a people on African-Americans, robbing them of their sense of self-worth. Malcolm asserts:

Your slavemaster, he brought you over here, and of your past everything was destroyed. Today, you do not know your true language. What tribe are you from? You would not recognize your tribe's name if you heard it. You don't know nothing about your true culture. You don't even know your family's real name. You are wearing a white man's name! The white slavemaster, who hates you!....You are the planet Earth's only group of people ignorant of yourself, ignorant of your own king, of your true history, ignorant of your enemy! You know nothing at all but what your white slavemaster has chosen to tell you. And he has told you only that

¹⁰Baker-Fletcher, 76-77.

which will benefit himself, and his own kind.¹¹

This project maintains that Malcolm's Black Power ideology had a primary influence on the Black theology that emerged in the 1960s, and will continue to shape Black theology in the years to come. This project concurs with Baker-Fletcher's profound assessment that Malcolm's notion of human dignity and self-respect deserves equal credit as that of King's thought. Malcolm X's notion of self-love and King's notion of somebodiness are very similar.¹²

Omit

~~Types of Black Theology~~

Black Womanist Theology

This section sets forth to argue that Black Womanist theology is a Black liberation theology that brings into focus crucial issues related to gender oppression, family, church, and community which are essential to the ongoing struggle for liberation in the African-American community. For the sake of focus, this section will concentrate its argument on how the Black theology of the 1960s' lack of understanding of how its doctrine of humanity perpetuates the gender oppression African-American women. Additionally, this section will point out how this gender oppression is linked to the delay of liberation and healing for the African-American family, church, and community.

When Black theology emerged in the 1960s its focus was

¹¹Malcolm X, 253.

¹²Baker-Fletcher, 76.

Heading reads as if you intend to discuss more than one. Then you proceed to

list one. you must have more than 1 heading at each level. There is only one heading - Black Womanist at this level.

you then need to reward + combine these

move this to 1st level, centered?

on white racism. It set forth to inform the African-American community of the implications of racism on African-American life, and to engage the community in a struggle to fight racism. The Black theology of the 1960s was in fact a theology that did not take African-American women's gender oppression in the church, community, and white world seriously. The implications are devastating not only to African-American women, but to the youth, family, church, and the community as a whole.

Black theology's central argument against racism was informed by its traditional understanding of the doctrine of humanity, that God Created African-Americans as human beings with the same worth, freedom, and ability as all other human beings. Unfortunately, male ministers, theologians, and others in the African-American community were solely focused on the fight against racism that they were blind to the gender oppression of women. There was a different view of the doctrine of humanity when it came to African-American women. Women were viewed as weak and less capable than their male counterparts solely on the basis of their gender. Significantly, this was the same rationale (with gender replaced with race) that European-American racists used to justify the oppression of African-American males in white society; the African-American male had the same oppressive belief in genetic inferiority that European-American racists had. In the book, Working with Black Youth: Opportunities

for Christian Ministry, in the chapter entitled "A Theological Framework," Jacquelyn Grant makes the argument that the doctrine of humanity is of utmost importance for a full understanding of the meaning of God in order for humanity to embrace a responsible ethic consistent with God as liberator rather than God as an unmerciful authoritarian. Grant asserts:

The "who we are?" question has bearing upon who we say God is. The doctrine of humanity then is of utmost importance for comprehending the meaning of God, because human beings are responsible for theological concepts. . . . When theology gives support to a model of relationships based on domination and submission, the nature of humanity is severely distorted. . . . Women and other victims tend to be forced to the weak negative side of the social sexual dualism. Women are thereby perceived to be weak and submissive while men are viewed to be strong and dominant. In the realm of human interaction men function as God.¹³

The gender oppression of African-American women is grounded in a distorted view of humanity. African-American males gave themselves the permission to assume the dominant role in the African-American family, church, and community based on a crude Biblical and theological perception that women were created by God to be weak and men strong and dominant. This interpretation of the doctrine of humanity forced

¹³Jacquelyn Grant, "A Theological Framework," in Working with Black Youth: Opportunities for Christian Ministry, eds. Charles R. Foster and Grant S. Schockley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 58-59.

African-American women into the triple oppression of race, sex, and class. In his book, The Prophethood of Black Believers, J. Deotis Roberts supports this chapter's assertion that, in the oppression of African-American women, as in racism, the Bible, which can set us free, also can be used to enslave. The problem, according to Roberts, is Biblical literalism; traditionally the Bible has been interpreted in ways that justify male domination. Biblical manipulation is an art that has been practiced by people all over the world, and both African-Americans and European-American racists are no exception. They set forth to find passages that they can interpret to mean specifically what they want to justify.¹⁴ The doctrine of humanity has been distorted by both European-American racists and African-Americans to justify their oppressive agenda.

However, since the emergence of Black theology in the 1960s, female African-American theologians such as Jacquelyn Grant and Delores Williams have brought Womanist Black theology to the forefront of theological discussion. In her book, Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk, Delores Williams lays out her vision for Black theology and the church, which is necessary as the church enters the new century. She wrote:

¹⁴J. Deotis Roberts, The Prophethood of Black Believers: An African American Political Theology for Ministry (Louisville: Westminster/John Know Press, 1994), 77.

The work of the African-American denominational churches' theologians, in consultation with the ministers and congregations, should be constantly to develop new principles for interpreting African-American people's history and the Bible--principles taking seriously the faith-experience of African-American people rooted in Africa, in America and in resistance. It would no doubt be helpful for black religious scholars, along with ministers and congregations, to be involved constantly in the task of "revaluing value" so that black people can root out the African-American denominational churches the alien sexist, capitalist, class and color values black people have internalized in their process of becoming "Americanized" and "Christianized." Instruments for reevaluation should be shaped by a nonsexist, nonhomophobic, noncolorist, nonelitist Afrocentric perspective.¹⁵

Womanist Black theologians have the same objective as their male counterparts, to bring liberation to African-Americans. However, Womanist Black theologians believe that the liberation of the African-American community cannot be attained until African-Americans come to grips with male oppressive tendencies, which will not happen until they acquire a profound understanding of the gender oppression of African-American women. Black male theologians such as James Cone, J. Deotis Roberts, Garth Baker-Fletcher, and Noel Erskine have in their writings and lectures urged the African-American church to take women seriously and to work in solidarity with them to bring healing and liberation to the African-American family, church, and community.

This chapter maintains that until Black Womanist

¹⁵Delores Williams, Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993), 218-19.

theology is granted due credit, the struggle for liberation will be incomplete, impaired and limited. Baker-Fletcher asserts:

one cannot truly claim allegiance to the African community's liberation or to Black churches unless one takes the entire history of Black women's experience as seriously as that of Black males. To stand for African-Americans is to stand with Black women, their tridimensional experience of oppression, their intellectual, economic, political, literary, and artistic achievements and disappointments. Taking Black women's experience as a source means to stand in solidarity with Black women.¹⁶

This project concurs with Baker-Fletcher's argument that solidarity with American-American females means commitment to the liberation struggle. This chapter will maintain its argument by suggesting that a consistent understanding of the doctrine of humanity with regard to women must be the starting point for solidarity. That is to say, the false myth of female inferiority must be replaced with the view that God created women as equals to men, and to be co-partners with them in God's work and in every aspect of human existence.

Finally, the objective of this section was twofold. First, to point out that Black Womanist theology is essential to Black theology; without it Black liberation theology would be incomplete. Second, that the gender oppression of African-American women in the family, church,

¹⁶Baker-Fletcher, 29.

and community is rooted in a distorted understanding of the doctrine of humanity. This project holds Black Womanist theology to be essential for the healing, liberation, and wholeness of the African-American community. This project will argue in its solution that Black Womanist theology is necessary to Black liberation theology in its totality to empower the church in its development of a plan of action to do ministry in a nihilistic culture and for the destruction of the African-American community's public enemy number one, the DCPC.

The Black Church and Black Theology

This section sets forth to argue that the African-American church has struggled against racism informed by an informal and a formal Black theology. The latter is that which is formulated in theological technique.

Informal Black theology is grounded in the faith tradition of the slave ancestors of African-Americans. Informal Black theology, since it took its origins in the midst of slavery is the same thing that this project alluded to earlier as a strong slave faith tradition. The slaves were suspicious of Christianity because it was the religion of their oppressors. In his book, The Social Teaching of the Black Churches, Peter J. Paris expounds on the dilemma in which the slaves found themselves in when they accepted Christianity as their religion. He asserts:

During the first century of their enslavement, blacks refused to accept

Christianity, because they associated it wholly with the religion of their masters--a religion that viewed them as slaves by nature. Only after they had had the opportunity to reform the religion of their overseers did they accept Christianity.¹⁷

The reformation of Christianity was necessary for the slaves to establish a Christian faith tradition that would empower them in their search for hope and meaning and in their struggle against slavery. An interpretation of the doctrine of humanity radically different from that of their masters was the departure point of informal Black theology. As this chapter mentioned earlier the slave faith tradition empowered the slaves to accept the faith position that God created them as human beings with the same talents and freedoms as other human beings.

Historically, the African-American church has had a mission of radical involvement in the political, social, and economic struggles for liberation in an effort to reform the larger European society. It devised strategies and methods it hoped would appeal to the religious conscience of European-American Christians, resulting in the practice of racial justice from the perspective of the Christian love ethic.¹⁸ The African-American church throughout its history has had to involve itself in every aspect of the African-

¹⁷Peter Paris, The Social Teaching of the Black Churches (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 110.

¹⁸Paris, Social Teaching, 111.

American experience, and for centuries it was informal Black theology that empowered the church in initiatives for social transformation. J. Deotis Roberts writes that Gayraud Wilmore understood informal Black theology from an anthropological perspective. Wilmore asserts:

It has been said that African American Theology began when the first slave wondered about God whose followers kept people in chains while calling them "brothers and sisters." Frederick Douglass was a black theologian in this sense. Most people who think about the faith out of their experience of oppression and in the style and idiom of black Baptist, African Methodist and Pentecostal churches, or other churches influenced by those same traditions, are in this sense black or African American theologians.¹⁹

Wilmore's definition rightly implies that informal Black theology has shaped and formed many great advocates of liberation within this African-American religious tradition, and they are Black theologians.

It is out of this religious experience that the African-American church came to be recognized by its members and oppressors as an institution of power. Paris expounds on the church's position of power in society when he argues that

the black churches have constituted a place of power both within the black community and as the black community's representative in the white society.

¹⁹Gayraud S. Wilmore, "Connecting Two Worlds" (a response to James Henry Harris), Christian Century (June 13-20, 1990) ~~601~~ as cited in Roberts, 14.

Their position of institutional primacy in the black community has enabled them to be the locus of racial social solidarity which, in turn, has comprised the basis of all cooperative activity aimed at racial advance Consequently, they have been the major lobbying force of the black community for racial justice.²⁰

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s led by Martin Luther King, Jr. is the best example of the church as a powerful institution in recent years. It was at this time that formal Black theology was born. The Civil Rights Movement began when Rosa Parks, a factory worker and a member of an African-American church refused to give up her seat to a European-American man on a Montgomery bus on December 1, 1955. Martin Luther King, Jr., a formally trained theologian who had studied theology and ethics at Crozier Theological Seminary and Boston University, was chosen to be the President of the Montgomery Improvement Association, an organization started by local African-American churches. The churches in Montgomery organized a boycott against the city bus system which lasted for 389 days and ended with a victory that received national attention. The success of this boycott brought Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement much media coverage, and the African-American church gained national credibility as an institution of power in U.S. society.

Historically, the African-American church urged the

²⁰Paris, Social Teaching, 112.

participation of church members in the social and political struggles of the African-American community. However, King's national prominence as a pastor and a civil rights leader inspired the energetic participation of thousands of church members across the U.S. This reality caused many European-Americans to fear the churches' ability to rally its followers, and to fear King as well because of his capacity to call for the radical involvement of a great number of African Americans.

Finally, the African-American church must continue to advocate a Black theology of the church that empowers the church as an activist institution to work for spiritual, economic, social and political change in the African-American community. Black Womanist theology must inspire African-Americans to work against the gender, race, and class oppression of African-American women.

This project will discuss Black theology of pastoral care in the final chapter in an effort to construct a model of ministry to destroy the DCPC.

CHAPTER 4

The DCPC and the African-~~A~~American Community:

A Model of Ministry for Healing

This chapter sets forth to use the Million Man March of October 16, 1995 and Canaan Baptist Church of Christ of Harlem, New York, as models of ministry with a plan of action for healing and liberation in the African-American community. This chapter's model of ministry will focus on healing the African-American youth. These young persons, mainly males, have accepted an identity and lifestyle dominated by what this project calls the Destructive Capitalistic Personality Complex or DCPC. The DCPC is the problem and liberating the youth from the DCPC is the challenge that this model of ministry will undertake. This chapter will address this objective by: first, examining the spiritual values of the Million Man March to focus on how these values are effective against a nihilistic culture and the DCPC, and arguing that the absence of these values in mainstream African-American society aids the spread of nihilism; second, by constructing a model of ministry influenced by the Million Man March, and by arguing that similar mini-marches in local communities across the nation will be an effective tool in teaching spiritual values; third, by examining Canaan Baptist Church of Christ's concept of ministry to African-American youth and the urban poor as a model of ministry for other churches to follow.

The Million Man March and the
Spiritual Value of Self-Love

The Million Man March brought over one million African-American men to Washington, D.C. from areas across the U.S., as far west as Los Angeles and south as Miami; they came from Atlanta, Baltimore, Birmingham, Boston, Charlotte, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, Detroit, Greensboro, Houston, Jackson, Jacksonville, Little Rock, Newark, St. Paul, St. Petersburg, Oakland, and Anchorage, Alaska. Why did they come? What did they wish to gain? These were the questions that were raised. The President of the United States, William Clinton, was not in Washington on that day, but he stated that he was pleased to see so many African-American men concerned about the plight of the African-American community. These men came to this march for spiritual renewal and to gain a new inspiration to accept responsibility for healing, liberation, and the development of the African-American community. This large gathering of African-American men was unprecedented in U.S. history. This writer recognizes that the focus and function of this march as well as the widespread interest it generated hold enormous potential for the emergence of a major movement in the African-American community that will focus on wide spread nihilism and public enemy number one, the DCPC. Some of those who participated in the Million Man March stated that when they left Washington after the march they returned

to their communities as different individuals with a new sense of dignity, self-love, self-respect, pride, family responsibility, and a sense of loyalty and commitment to the African-American struggle against oppression and injustice.

The Million Man March was a spiritual rally promoting spiritual values which are rooted in Malcolm X's notions of self-love.¹ The absence of self-love in African-American youth is the source of many problems, including crime, drug trafficking and abuse, violence, gang activity, the disproportionate amount of men in prison, unemployment and underemployment, low self-esteem, the lack of motivation to pursue an education, teenage pregnancy, misogyny, and rampant ignorance and hopelessness. The spiritual value of self-love is a deterrent to wide spread nihilism. The DCPC is evidenced when thousands of young men take up drug dealing without regard for the welfare of those to whom they sell and those who they are violent toward. As discussed in Chapter 2, Rick Ross, the largest crack dealer in South Central Los Angeles, is a prime example of one who has the DCPC. He supplied crack to a huge number of people whose lives were destroyed and brought hundreds of young men to the violence of the drug business. The absence of self-love's twin, love of others, facilitated Ross' indifference to those his business affected and the development of his

¹Malcolm X, The Autobiography of Malcolm X (New York: Ballantine Books, 1964), 277-78.

DCPC. The lack of self-love can lead to destructive behavior, and self-love is necessary before an individual can love others and understand the universal meaning of love which affirms the sanctity of human life and the importance of the common good. In his book, The Black Church in the African American Experience, C. Eric Lincoln argues that the self-affirmation of African-Americans has had a positive affect on spiritual, social, and economic progress in the African-American community. He asserts:

Since the civil rights period, the black revolution in consciousness has had a profound impact on the black community and on the larger society. Rev. Jesse Jackson's presidential campaigns in 1984 and 1988 and the election of thousands of black officials in the large urban areas and small towns. Other signs included a large increase in the numbers of black students in colleges and graduate schools, an enlarged black middle class, and a period of creative ferment of black literary and intellectual talent reminiscent of the achievements of the Harlem Renaissance.²

Many other positive accomplishments in the African-American community are attributable to a strong sense of self-love and self-affirmation. The need for positive self-affirmation was advocated by Malcolm X. Garth Baker-Fletcher asserts, "Malcolm believed that self-respect had been systematically stripped away from American Blacks by

and Lawrence H. Mamiya,

²C. Eric Lincoln, The Black Church in the African American Experience (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 166-67.

the European-American system of racism."³ The lack of self-love has dangerous existential consequences.

In his book, Black Lies, White Lies: The Truth According to Tony Brown, Tony Brown argues that African-Americans' negative perception of themselves as people of an inferior race defines their total outlook, which influences their spiritual and social behavior. He discusses an article published by the Washington Post entitled "Stereotype Within" that was about a sixth grade public school class in Montgomery County, Maryland. The African-American students in the class were asked to speak on their impression of their race. A young girl articulated her impression of her race by stating, "everybody knows that Black people are bad. That's the way we are."⁴ The tragedy, as Brown rightly argues, is that more than 90 percent of a class of 29 students believed that African-Americans were inferior. Brown states that the article went on to give a more detailed description of these students' impression of their race. He asserts:

The Washington Post article outlined the tragic results of negative self-image and stereotypes among the young Black students. In general, they believed that: Blacks are poor and stay poor because they are dumber than Whites and

³Garth Baker-Fletcher, Xodus: An African American Male Journey (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 76.

⁴Tony Brown, Black Lies, White Lies: The Truth According to Tony Brown (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1995), 121.

Asians. Black kids who do their schoolwork and behave must want to be White. White kids who do poorly or dress cool want to be Black. Hispanic kids want to be Black because they aren't smart like Whites. Black people don't like to work hard. Blacks don't need to work hard because it won't matter in the end. Black people have to be bad so they can fight and defend themselves from other Blacks. Black men make women pregnant and leave. Black boys expect to die young and unnaturally. White people are smart and make money.⁵

Brown maintains that these young people were not defining themselves, but were defining their environment. He believes that this self-victimization has become a cultural legacy of many African-Americans and is a great barrier to African-American progress.⁶ The writer of this project concurs with Brown's belief that self-love is necessary for liberation and self-victimization is a barrier to African-American progress. In the book, Working with Black Youth: Opportunities for Christian Ministry, Janice Hale-Benson, in the chapter entitled "Psychosocial Experiences" states:

The dire statistics on the compendium of problems of black youths are well known. How do black children endowed with innate equal childhood potential arrive at such a disadvantaged youth status? That question explores what in the schools reproduces failure in black children generation after generation. Schools do function as the major socializing institution in our society. Students who drop out, are pushed out,

⁵Brown, 122.

⁶Brown, 123.

or are provided a diminished education are disconnected from a viable future. Other problems confronting black youth such as teen pregnancy, crime, drugs, and unemployment emanate from school failure. . . . Black children do not enter school disadvantaged. They emerge from school as disadvantaged youth.⁷

The Million Man March model of positive engagement and spiritual fellowship, grounded in self-love to promote responsibility to the struggle for liberation, is useful for the destruction of the DCPC. The spiritual value of self-love was a part of the slave faith tradition which was discussed in Chapter 3. The Million Man March was an interfaith spiritual event that united African-American men to focus on the progress of the African-American community. The Million Man March model is a useful model for energizing a movement.

However, there the Million Man March was flawed: only men were invited by Louis Farrakhan, who asked women to stay at home, a statement that was oppressive to women. The uplift and participation of African-American women are equally important, particularly in light of the fact that they are the only parent in 70 percent of African-American homes.⁸ Because of this exclusiveness, the Million Man

⁷Janice Hale-Benson, "Psychosocial Experiences," in Working with Black Youth, eds. Charles R. Foster and Grant S. Shockley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 33-34.

⁸Louise L. Hornor, ed., Black Americans: A Statistical Sourcebook (Palo Alto, Calif.: Information Publications, 1994), 23.

March was incomplete and flawed.

The model that this project proposes for use in African-American communities across the U.S. is a mini-model built on the same concept as the Million Man March, with the same spiritual substance, but without the exclusiveness, calling for the full participation of women. This mini-model promotes the spiritual value of self-love with the same type of spiritual fellowship demonstrated in the original march, but among all African-Americans rather than men only. This project proposes that the mini-marches be organized by the participants of the October, 1995 march in their local communities. In fact, many of these communities have initiated campaigns to increase voter registration, assist in the adoption of African-American children, and to discourage drugs and violence.

Finally, this mini-model calls for the radical involvement of the entire African-American community in teaching the spiritual value of self-love in an effort to destroy the DCPC. This project maintains that self-love must be the beginning of a movement to save this and future generations of youth.

The Canaan Baptist Church Model

Canaan Baptist Church sits in the middle of a poor neighborhood in Harlem, New York, but its approach to ministry has bore amazing results for the disadvantaged in that community. Wyatt Tee Walker, one of Martin Luther

King, Jr.'s followers, is creatively leading his nearly two thousand-family congregation into the twenty-first century with a holistic approach to ministry that takes seriously the complexity of the spiritual, social, economic, and political issues related to the ongoing suffering of African-Americans. Although there are many other African-American congregations of different denominational persuasions that have demonstrated a firm commitment to the liberation of the disadvantaged, this project chose Canaan Baptist Church for the following reasons:

1. Its location in a poor urban community,
2. Its continuing successes in ministry,
3. Its overall approach to ministry,
4. Its methodology for youth empowerment.

At the National Conference on the Black Church and Community Economic Development held at the Harvard School of Divinity in April 1994, Rev. Charles Adams explained why Wyatt Tee Walker was chosen to be the keynote speaker at that conference on community economic development.

Wyatt Tee Walker was invited to articulate the aims and aspirations of the Harvard Conference on the economic structure and service of the Black Church because Canaan Baptist Church, of which he is the esteemed pastor, best represents that structure and that service.⁹

⁹Wyatt Tee Walker, The African-American Church and Economic Development (New York: Martin Luther King Fellows Press, 1994), ix.

The Canaan Baptist Church model of ministry is one that takes seriously every aspect of Christian discipleship to empower the church's ability to be a symbol of hope in disadvantaged Harlem. Walker believes that church disciples' tithes to the church is their commitment to the total church mission and to Christ's work of the liberation of the poor. The mission of the church is defined in Luke 4: 18-19, the text in which Jesus defined his mission. Walker understands this text from a Black theological perspective. That is, Jesus is salvation and liberation, and his focus was to liberate the poor and the oppressed. The point of departure of Jesus' mission was his promise of deliverance to the poor, which he declared in his reading of Isaiah 61:1-2 in a Nazareth synagogue as the theme of God's liberation of the poor. However, there are numerous other texts that support this Black theology tradition of liberation that are connected to this theme of God's liberation, but this one is particularly important to African-American pastors because Jesus declares that the promised deliverance of liberation was his primary focus and mission. Luke 4:18-19 is the statement of mission of Canaan Baptist church in disadvantaged Harlem. The mission is a basic one of commitment to developing disciples and an outreach ministry that is designed to fight against oppression in every aspect of African-American life as a means to deliver the hope promised by Jesus.

The Tithing Model:

A Black Theology Perspective

Walker's total approach to ministry is grounded in the church's mission statement; from it he interprets a Christian principle of tithing as the foundation in which the church must operate as the agent for the spiritual cultivation of disciples, social engagement, the economic empowerment of the church and community, and the educational development of the youth. He argues:

The Black family is under siege internally and externally; the unhampered flow of drugs into Black communities feeds on the despair induced largely by economic injustice and internally by the deterioration of the unit and self-inflicted violence that kills Black males and children. All of this social havoc at this moment in history sits squarely on the front step of the African-American Church. This is precisely why the quantum leap on the tithing question is of such critical import.¹⁰

This model of ministry takes seriously the idea of self-help through economic development. According to Walker, the African-American church cannot fulfill its commitment to the poor without a strategic economic plan that will accumulate necessary resources to support ministry. He believes that the salvation of the race is in the hands of the African-American church and Christ, the liberator, and that the

¹⁰Wyatt Tee Walker, African-American Church and Economic Development, 26.

notion that an outside agency such as the U.S. government or a liberal entity will carry the torch of liberation is naive and is as destructive as the forces responsible for oppression. He affirms the theological position that the church is liberation and salvation because it is Christ in the world. Therefore, Canaan Baptist is Christ and the only true hope of the poor in disadvantaged Harlem.

Canaan Baptist Church has emerged as a major religious, social, educational, political, and entrepreneurial institution in Harlem with the respect, dignity, and pride that success brings. The church's nearly two thousand-family congregation earns an average annual salary just above 12,000 dollars. However, the tithing income is in excess of 1.2 million dollars and continues to grow. Walker attributes the fact that Canaan has 1,742 tithers to his teachings on tithing, the church's holistic approach to the ministry of liberation, the members' commitment to the vision of the church, and to Christ.¹¹ The Canaan Baptist Church complex is valued at 10 million dollars; the church is presently in the middle of the construction of a 2.5 million dollar community center. The church presently owns and operates 437 affordable housing units in Central Harlem aimed at rebuilding that poor neighborhood; these housing

¹¹Wyatt Tee Walker, African-American Church and Economic Development, 28.

units are valued in excess of 33 million dollars.¹² The Canaan Credit Union maintains a membership of more than 600 church members with more than 1.3 million dollars in assets. This financial institution carries life insurance for each member, sponsors a Christmas Club, and offers low-rate signature, automobile, and other loans as well as investments. Canaan Baptist Church operates several businesses which will be discussed later in the chapter.¹³

The Political Model

Walker's political involvement is informed by Martin Luther King, Jr.'s notion of radical involvement for social change. In a class for all new disciples of Canaan, political awareness, responsibility, and participation are an essential part of the spiritual orientation. It is taught that being a Christian carries with it the Christian responsibility of ministry to the poor, a Biblical mandate to be taken seriously. Every Canaan disciple is encouraged to become a registered voter, and before each election, voter registration forms are made available at the church. Registering and voting are emphasized in the Canaan family.

Pastoral Care Model

Canaan Baptist Church has a staff of four African-American pastors that manifests the scope of Black

¹²Wyatt Tee Walker, African-American Church and Economic Development, 22.

¹³Wyatt Tee Walker, African-American Church and Economic Development, 44.

liberation theology. These ministers are all trained theologians and professional ministers. One is from the Womanist Black theology tradition. According to Walker, she has been instrumental in teaching the church about gender, race, and class oppression from the black woman's perspective. The youth minister is a part of this staff of trained clergy. Additionally, the church has a staff of professionally trained counselors who provide family, personal, and financial counseling, and assist the pastoral staff with some spiritual counseling.

Youth Ministry Model

Canaan Baptist Church has many important ministries that are informed by the Black theology tradition, but since this project's focus is on the liberation of the African-American youth, the remaining discussion will focus on its model of youth ministry as a holistic strategic plan of action for the empowerment of young African-Americans. This plan is made up of several ministries designed to liberate young African-Americans and empower them to become productive disciples and American citizens. They include:

Cultural Enrichment

This is a program of cultural enrichment for youth aged 10 to 25 that reaches into the Canaan and Harlem communities with activities related to African and African-American history and culture, all manner of creative expression, resume-writing, job interviewing, and job etiquette. This

program organizes trips to museums, plays, and movies, and maintains a reading club.

Educational Enrichment

Canaan has institutionalized a joint tutorial program for students in grades 2-8 with the Robert Francis Learning Center of Harlem. Services are offered by licensed teachers and experienced tutors who use a mixture of whole group, small group, and individualized instruction. The center teaches reading and mathematics for several hours each Saturday.

Canaan's Intern Program

Canaan provides professional training to young people to cultivate talent and develop skills by teaching them how to operate a business. The Canaan Catering Service, owned and operated by the church, provides intern opportunities to youth. They earn 10 dollars an hour, twice the minimum wage, and learn the entire concept of business operation. Interns are also employed and trained to perform church administrative tasks such as the production of bulletins and programs, payroll preparation, and telephone reception. Interns develop skills in computer data entry, word processing, electronic switch boarding, and public relations.

The Canaan Resource Center

The center provides employment information to the Harlem community. Because the center advocated for jobs for

in
Contents

Harlem's disadvantaged, many businesses offered job opportunities and others outsourced to local community institutions.

Substance Abuse

Canaan has several support groups for substance abusers. These groups are facilitated by Canaan disciples who are former substance abusers and two Canaan disciples who are trained psychologists. These wounded healers continue to stay off crack, alcohol, and other drugs through these programs. These groups meet weekly and are dedicated to the healing process.

Prison Ministry

Canaan reaches into local prisons in an effort to guide young African-Americans back to positive membership in U.S. society. This ministry provides a one-on-one mentor program to residents of a Bronx halfway house, maintains a weekly visitation program of spiritual enrichment, and sponsors a pen pal program between Canaan disciples and prisoners.¹⁴

Finally, Canaan Baptist Church is a viable religious institution with a holistic approach to ministry rooted in the Black theology tradition that is leading thousands of African-Americans in a search for meaning. This project recommends this model of ministry to churches and mosques across the U.S.

¹⁴Wyatt Tee Walker, African-American Church and Economic Development, 30.

This model, along with the previously described model influenced by the Million Man March that calls for a collective ministry of African-American churches to promote the spiritual value of self-love, has the potential to promote the radical involvement of many in the fight to destroy the DCPC and nihilism. If churches across the country adopt the Canaan model of ministry, particularly youth ministry, the following will be possible:

1. After local churches use the Million Man March as a model to plant the seed of self-love, the youth will then have many programs available to provide them spiritual nurturing and social, educational, professional, and economic assistance.

2. These youth will then become a part of the movement rather than a part of the problem.

CHAPTER 5

The Destructive Capitalistic Personality and the Solution

This chapter sets forth to construct a systematic plan of action for the destruction of the DCPC and the liberation of the African-American community. This plan of action utilizes the models discussed in Chapter 4 as the structure for this Black theology movement. Additionally, this systematic plan of action will require the cooperation of many institutions in the African-American community and in society at large to play a vital role in a team effort. However, this endeavor must be carefully organized, led, and implemented by a strong African-American institution already working in this field that can use the Million Man March as its model. This project advocates the National Committee of Black Christians as that organization because of its diverse makeup of theologians, scholars, ministers, and community activists. Additionally, the model of the Million Man March must be a key part of this team effort in order to expand the interest inspired by the Million Man March, with the mini-model in local communities across the U.S. Some of the ideas and suggestions of Deborah Prothrow-Stith and Michael Weissman stated in Deadly Consequences are embraced. This project finds Michael Eric Dyson's argument presented in his book, Reflecting Black: African-American Cultural Criticism, helpful in finding a solution to the drug problem.

The problems of the DCPC and nihilism are complex and

will be difficult to resolve. There are many components of suffering and destruction connected to this ongoing cycle of oppression which have made it difficult for community activists and Black theology to determine which component of this despair is most deadly and must be dealt with first. The stated goal of a movement cannot be fighting racism at large because it is too big and vague a target, and it is not feasible to achieve concrete results within a certain amount of time. This project maintains that fighting the DCPC, a clearly-defined target, must be the first goal of a movement today.

A vast number of young African-Americans grow up disadvantaged by poverty, substandard education, and prejudice, and eventually perceive the drug business as the only means to self-esteem and success. Instead of finding true meaning and hope, they acquire the DCPC. The nihilistic and materialistic culture in which they live leaves them vulnerable enough to want to risk their lives in a lifestyle of crime and violence. When these young persons decide to acquire the values of the DCPC, material success at any cost, they lose regard for the sanctity of human life. For these reasons, this project proposes that the DCPC is public enemy number one.

The military theory of fighting small wars until one is capable of winning the big war is the strategy that Black theology in the U.S. must adopt. After the Vietnam War,

military strategists concurred that thereafter, before the U.S. committed troops to a military engagement, it must have a clearly-defined, limited, and feasible goal. The more feasible goal of fighting the DCPC must be the initial goal of a movement for the liberation of the African-American youth. It is a realistic way to attack the larger demon of racism.

Furthermore, the systematic plan of action must include every aspect of society that is currently a part of the problem and turn them into a part of the solution. This includes the church, African-American institutions, political institutions, law enforcement institutions, and educational institutions, each will be mentioned, but some in more in detail. Each step of this plan of action will include the following strategies.

Step 1: Black Theology

The argument of this project is that Black theology in any culture cannot be effective when it does not have a clear, limited, and feasible goal and spreads itself too thin. In order for Black theology to be effective it must have a clearly-defined vision focusing on a specific target, and a function at the grass roots level. The function is the action, which is the church, but without a clearly-defined vision focusing on a specific target, the plan of action will fail as argued in chapter one. See chapter one. However, Black theology in the United States did not gain

the kind of grass roots support that it takes to ignite a movement. However, it is important to mention at this point that Cone's Black theology was rejected by the African-American Church in the United States. Therefore, Cone can not be blamed for the failure of a movement to emerge at the grass roots. Additionally, Cone's Black theology has been quite helpful to the African-Church; it set forth to take the Black Liberation movement of the 1950s and 60s a step further in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. It is significant that South African Black theologians constructed a South African Black theology from James Cone's Black theology of Liberation. Additionally, they used the term "Black Theology", which was coined in the United States. Basil Moore credits Cone's work, A Black Theology of Liberation,¹ for its contribution to the development of a Black liberation theology in South Africa. As mentioned in a previous chapter, Black theology in South Africa emerged with a movement because it focused on apartheid, which it identified as the public enemy number one. Not only were Black South Africans motivated to fight apartheid, but the world community adopted the vision of South African Black theology to destroy apartheid. This project is not suggesting that everyone in the world community participated in this effort, but African-Americans, some economic

¹Basil Moore, "What is Black Theology?" in The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973), 1.

institutions, churches around the world, components of the world media, and certain governments believed that apartheid was evil and embraced the vision of the South African Black theology movement. This movement was a grass roots one, grounded in the courage and faith of the people to fight for justice and freedom. The spiritual and political dynamics of the South African Black theology and political liberation movements that led to the dismantling of apartheid consisted of a powerful spiritual and political component. The African National Congress (ANC) provided the political vision and focus, and the Black theology movement educated, inspired, and motivated the masses. They both harmonized the fight into one meaningful spiritual and political struggle that led to the emergence of a new government, the construction of a new constitution, and the destruction of apartheid. Many church leaders were members of the ANC and many ANC followers and leaders were also members of the Black church. However, the ANC had been in place as a major institution to be reckon with for several decades before Black theology emerged in South Africa as a movement; the ANC had established its political philosophy and methodology to fight against apartheid, and continued to advance as an organization, improving in philosophy and methodology. The ANC grew massively during the years after the Black theology movement intensified at the grass roots. The ANC was the political machine behind the success of the impassioned

fight that defeated apartheid. That is to say, the ANC was already in place prior to the South African Black theology era of spiritual awakening of the Black masses, and it was already organized to provide the political vision and muscle for the revolution; it also had the clout to attract white liberals in South Africa, and to rally the support of countries, institutions, and individuals around the world.

Black theology in the U.S. has the substance, but has not emerged with a clearly-defined vision that focuses on a sole target. In the U.S., Black theology has focused on racism at large rather than identifying a concrete target and promoting it as the African-American community's public enemy number one. This has resulted in the lack of motivation of people to support such a poorly-defined enemy. However, if the enemy is identified, like this project identifies the DCPC, it is easier for people to grasp the necessity of a movement and be motivated to join it. The DCPC, as public enemy number one, would give U.S. Black theology the crucial clarity.

The first step of the plan of action calls for U.S. Black theology to establish a vision, a focus, and a function at the grass roots level to wage a movement against the DCPC and its twin crisis, nihilism.

Step 2: Black Theology Model:

A Church and Community Perspective

The Million Man March was attended by 1.2 million

African-Americans who came from communities all over the nation. This indicates a movement that is waiting to emerge. The Million Man March lacked vision because it was not inclusive of women, but had the focus, the spiritual value of self-love. The function must expand to churches in local communities.

As previously mentioned in this chapter, this strategic plan of action influenced by the Million Man March needs an African-American organization to implement this model in local communities as the key initial step. This project recommends the National Committee of Black Christians (NCBC) as that organization. The movement's vision will be to destroy the DCPC. The focus will be the DCPC as public enemy number one. The function will be the African-American church. The function of this model has two components.

The first function is the NCBC's implementation of the Million Man March model in local communities across the U.S.; this model is designed to bring churches and mosques together to teach the spiritual value of self-love. The NCBC would organize quarterly spiritual rallies in areas where there is widespread nihilism that, with the guidance of local church leaders, will have the same substance the 1995 Washington march had. This strategic plan of action calls for the teaching of self-love by churches and mosques in local communities in a radically involved manner. The Million Man March's message of self-love captivated its

participants because it made a profound connection with the destruction of the family, crime, the drug crisis, violence, and gang activity. The participants pledged love to themselves, to each other and to all African-American men. They pledged not to disrespect African-American women and children. They pledged to be loyal to the African-American struggle for liberation. They pledged to join the struggle for hope in their local communities. They pledged to love themselves by not abusing their bodies, souls, and minds with lethal substances. This march inspired people to adopt the spiritual value of self-love.

African-American women make up the overwhelming majority of African-American churches' membership. Delores Williams maintains that if African-American women left, the African-American church would cease to exist.² African-American men make up a minority of African-American churches' membership, but the Million Man March attracted more than one million of them. This project suggests that these type of spiritual rallies are what are needed to inspire people in African-American communities across the U.S., and that it is the NCBC that has the potential to set this strategic plan of action into motion at the grass roots level. These marches in local communities will take root at the grass roots level and soon emerge into a national

²Delores Williams, Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993), xiii.

movement.

The second function of this model is the promotion of the Canaan model. The next step for the NCBC is to publicize the Canaan Baptist Church model of ministry to other African-American churches in an effort to empower them to emerge as major religious, social, and economic institutions. Sharing a common model and vision will generate unity among and within churches, and congregations will subsequently grow as Canaan did in Harlem. The Canaan model takes ministering to the disadvantaged seriously: Canaan's ministries focus on the spiritual, social, economic, educational, professional, and personal needs of Harlem's disadvantaged. The church has emerged as a major religious and economic institution in Harlem, and this is attributable to: first, its teachings on tithing; second, its teaching that true discipleship brings with it a commitment and responsibility to God and to the disadvantaged that calls for responsible citizenship, community loyalty, and church commitment; third, its many ministries programs for the uplift of African-American life. This project recommends the Canaan model to churches across the U.S. because it provides the African-American community with more resources in the fight against oppression and recognizes the value of self-love and self-help. As the pastor of Canaan, Wyatt Tee Walker, often says, the Black church must free its people from oppression because no

government, outside agency, or liberal organization of goodwill can do it. The African-American church is the primary institution that can wage this war.

Step 3: The Drug Problem

The DCPC is manifested in the drug problem in the African-American community. Self-love is a determining factor in whether a youth will or will not acquire the DCPC. Young people in search of meaning, but disadvantaged by the consequences of racism, are vulnerable to the DCPC. When poverty, substandard education, and prejudice hamper their job prospects, the drug business appears to be the only feasible path to material success and a sense of self-worth. In his book, Reflecting Black: African-American Cultural Criticism, Michael Eric Dyson argues that

when traditional avenues for the realization of personal growth, esteem, and self-worth, usually gained through employment and career opportunities, have been closed, young black men find gangs a powerful alternative. Gangs also offer immediate material gratification through a powerful and lucrative underground economy.³

Profits from the crack business has enabled gangs to become powerful, organized and armed organizations. For many young African-Americans, becoming a crack dealer is the way to achieve material success and a sense of worth. Michael Eric Dyson suggests why thousands of young African-Americans get involved in the drug culture, and how it is devastating the

³Michael Eric Dyson, Reflecting Black: African-American Cultural Criticism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 188.

African-American community. He asserts:

One of the more devastating developments in inner-city communities is the presence of drugs and the criminal activity associated with their production, marketing, and consumption. Through the escalation of the use of the rocklike form of cocaine known as "crack" and intensified related gang activity, young black men are involved in a vicious subculture of crime. This subculture is sustained by two potent attractions: The personal acceptance and affirmation gangs offer and the possibility of enormous economic reward.⁴

The subject of how to wage an effective war against drugs has been much debated. In his book, Empower the People, Theodore Walker, Jr. asserts:

Moreover, both liberal and conservative public policy analysts agree that "drug-related" activity, aside from being a crime in itself, contributes to the increase of other criminal activity. To be sure, it is now widely conceived that the largest part of war against crime should consist of war against drugs, and also that both public and private sectors, including the work place, should join this war.⁵

However, the African-American community must guard against policy-makers who attempt to dominate the effort against drugs in the African-American community. Too much is at stake for the African-American community to allow ill-informed policy-makers and law enforcement officials to develop and implement a strategy without its radical involvement and input. In the past, African-Americans have been the victims of policies that were supposed to help

⁴Dyson, 187.

⁵Theodore Walker, Jr., Empower the People (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991), 65.

them. Walker argues:

Clearly, Afro-America shares concern with, and suffers greatly from, abusive drug use and criminal activity. However, from our perspective it appears that many current and impending versions of warring against drugs and crime amount to war against black and colored people. Our experience of war on drugs and crime has been one of increased suffering and oppression.⁶

Therefore, the African-American church must lead the war against drugs in its own communities with its radical involvement with local law enforcement agencies as much as possible; it must monitor law enforcement agencies' activities and work with them. Many law enforcement agencies have gained a reputation for being prejudiced and abusive toward African-Americans, and with the prison population continuing to rise, this must be monitored.

This is a key problem, but the church must do the following: first, there must be a collective effort among churches and mosques in local African-American communities to establish drug rehabilitation clinics; these churches must explore the possibility of obtaining federal matching funds to set up these clinics; second, a pastoral care program focused on healing substance abusers must be implemented in churches in local communities across the U.S.; third, churches with drug clinics and pastoral care programs for substance abusers must invite substance abusers from other churches who do not have a clinic or a program;

⁶Theodore Walker, 65.

fourth, previous drug dealers and abusers must participate in a drug prevention program by speaking at schools, parks, recreational facilities, and other places where young people congregate.

The Canaan ministry model for pastoral care must be promoted by the NCBC in an effort to help other churches develop a pastoral care model of ministry and get involved in ministering to the needs of drug abusers. The NCBC must solicit and benefit from the knowledge and expertise of theologians, ministers, activists, and scholars. Edward Wimberly and Richard Cobble are two such people. Edward Wimberly has written extensively on the subject of pastoral care in the Black church, and his work has been helpful to African-American pastors.⁷ Wimberly's ideas must be utilized by the NCBC in this strategic plan of action. Additionally, Richard Cobble, Assistant Pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia and the founder of Agape House, a drug rehabilitation clinic in Atlanta, is extremely knowledgeable on the subject of substance addiction. Cobble is a Black theologian whose clinical approach has a spiritual emphasis. Agape House has rehabilitated and helped hundreds of crack addicts become productive citizens in their communities. Agape house is a drug clinic that

⁷Two books written by Edward Wimberly that are particularly helpful for African-American pastoral care are African American Pastoral Care (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991) and Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Values: A Black Point of View (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982).

deserves to be adopted as a model by African-American communities. Cobble specializes in substance abuse treatment and, in his doctoral dissertation, made a thorough and insightful examination of holistic church initiatives.⁸ Cobble could serve as the NCBC's National Field Representative. There are numerous other African-American churches across the U.S. with drug clinics whose ministry models, experience, and expertise may be edifying.

Step 4: Community Policing

Some of the methods law enforcement agencies use to police underclass communities have generated resentment and alienation rather than positive feelings and cooperation. Police officers patrol these communities from their cars. Foot patrolling allows officers to interface with community people in a more intimate and friendly way. In their book, Deadly Consequences, Deborah Prothrow-Stith and Michaela Weissman argue in favor of foot patrol for less antagonistic community relations. She asserts:

A new brand of policing that advocates the return of foot patrol interests me very much--not only as a tactic for improving police community relations, but also as method of combatting crime.⁹

According to Prothrow-Stith and Weissman, the method of

⁸Richard H. Cobble, "Examining and Exploring Community and Church Initiatives that Provide Wholistic Approaches for Confronting Substance Abuse" (Ph.D. diss., Interdenominational Theological Center, 1995).

⁹Deborah Prothrow-Stith and Michaela Weissman, Deadly Consequences (New York: HarperPerennial, 1991), 195.

policing that is in use in most cities has failed because it is motivated by statistics, that is, the number of arrests made. Ironically, crime has increased.¹⁰ Prothrow-Stith and Weissman advocate a preventive plan that targets areas where crime is more likely to occur by making infrastructural changes. For example, if night after night drug dealers gather on a darkened playground, instead of arresting them only to witness them released a few hours later, install high density lights, thus making the area too bright and less attractive for business transactions.¹¹ This project does not suggest that drug dealers should not be punished by the law, but that law enforcement must develop preventive measures as a deterrent to crime.

The radical involvement of African-Americans in the formation of policing policies is necessary for constructive, rather than antagonistic, law enforcement. The African-American community must take the initiative to make community policing a part of the solution rather than a part of the problem.

Step 5: The Political Strategy

This plan of action is centered around the radical involvement of African-American churches in their local communities for spiritual growth, economic development, and community improvement at all levels from the perspective of

¹⁰Prothrow-Stith and Weissman, 195-96.

¹¹Prothrow-Stith and Weissman, 196.

self-love and self-help. Historically, the African-American church has aggressively pursued a political agenda as a means to resolve many of its ills. This political activity included participating in the Civil Rights Movement, promoting voter registration and voting, educating people on political issues and candidates, and endorsing certain candidates for public office and opposing others. In spite of this, a vast number of African-Americans remain politically apathetic. In his book, The Black Church in the African American Experience, C. Eric Lincoln says that many African-Americans are uninspired by the political system itself. He asserts:

our research data on the seven mainline black denominations, which represent more than 80 percent of all black Christians, indicate that only 8.4 percent of the clergy supported the view of noninvolvement in such problems. . . . the vast majority (91.6 percent) of black clergy nationwide advocated church involvement in social and political issues. However, these results are important in debunking the myth that religious alienation is the cause for the political alienation of large numbers of black people from the electoral process. The causes for the alienation are to be found in the political system itself, and the continuing dilemma of racism in a society which wants to be perceived as democratic and under God.¹²

This plan of action calls for an intensified grass roots involvement at the local level. Historically, local political involvement has brought about advances in civil

and Lawrence H. Mamiya,

¹²C. Eric Lincoln, The Black Church in the African American Experience (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 167.

rights. Local communities must focus on improving educational institutions and constructive programs that channel the youth's energy to positive paths.

This plan of action utilizing the two models previously mentioned calls for local churches and mosques to work collectively with a clearly-defined goal. The focus is the battle against the DCPC, but the local organizations must include political action among its tools. Educational institutions have an essential role in shaping the spiritual, emotional, and mental development of African-American youth, and is the institution that requires primary attention. Its reform will be facilitated by political policy, and African-Americans must have a voice in this policy and take ownership of the school system they support with their tax dollars.

Conclusion

This project presents several steps in this systematic plan of action to attack the public enemy number one of the African-American community, the Destructive Capitalistic Personality Complex (DCPC). South African Black theology developed a motivated movement and set the stage for the destruction of apartheid, which it identified as public enemy number one. South African Black theology was a theology that was relevant in the daily lives of the oppressed in South Africa because it worked to battle what oppressed them. This project has argued that it had the

following: first, a vision that the people shared; second, a focus on a sole public enemy; third, a clearly defined function to destroy that enemy. This project has devised a plan of action for U.S. Black theology to develop a movement at the grass roots level to wage war on an identified public enemy number one, the DCPC. This systematic plan of action will teach the spiritual value of self-love throughout disadvantaged African-American communities using two models. The Million Man March mini-model serves as the methodology to teach the spiritual value of self-love. The second model is the Canaan Baptist Church ministry model, which has a view to make African-American churches emerge as powerful social, economic, and educational institutions for the empowerment of the disadvantaged in local communities across the nation and for the destruction of the DCPC. This plan of action has proposed a specific strategy informed by Black theology and to be implemented by an African-American institution, the NCBC.

Historically, African-American youth have led the struggle against racism. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s was spearheaded by young people such as the 25-year-old Martin Luther King, Jr. and the 28-year-old Ralph Abernathy. Throughout history, the youth has had the idealism, vision, passion, and energy to challenge question the way things are. In a sermon delivered at the International Christian University in Tokyo, Japan, Jovito

Salonga, a Philippine Senator and active church layperson, pointed out that Christianity started as a youth movement.

He spoke:

The Gospel does not allow us to forget that Christianity entered the world as a youth movement. Jesus was a young man of 30 when He started His ministry. Biblical scholars tell us that his disciples were in their early 20s when they went out to follow Jesus. When we examine the work of the Magnificent Twelve, it is actually the story of 12 young people to transform a sinful world that we are studying.¹³

This project is not merely about saving the youth; the future is in the hands of the youth, and African-Americans must fight against oppression in each generation.

¹³Jovito Salonga, "The Need for Transforming Leadership," sermon delivered at International Christian University, Tokyo, 17 April 1994.

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